
"Out of the Land of Bondage": The English Revolution and the Atlantic Origins of Abolition

Author(s): JOHN DONOGHUE

Source: *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 115, No. 4 (OCTOBER 2010), pp. 943-974

Published by: [Oxford University Press](#) on behalf of the [American Historical Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23303208>

Accessed: 14-03-2016 17:15 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Oxford University Press and American Historical Association are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Historical Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

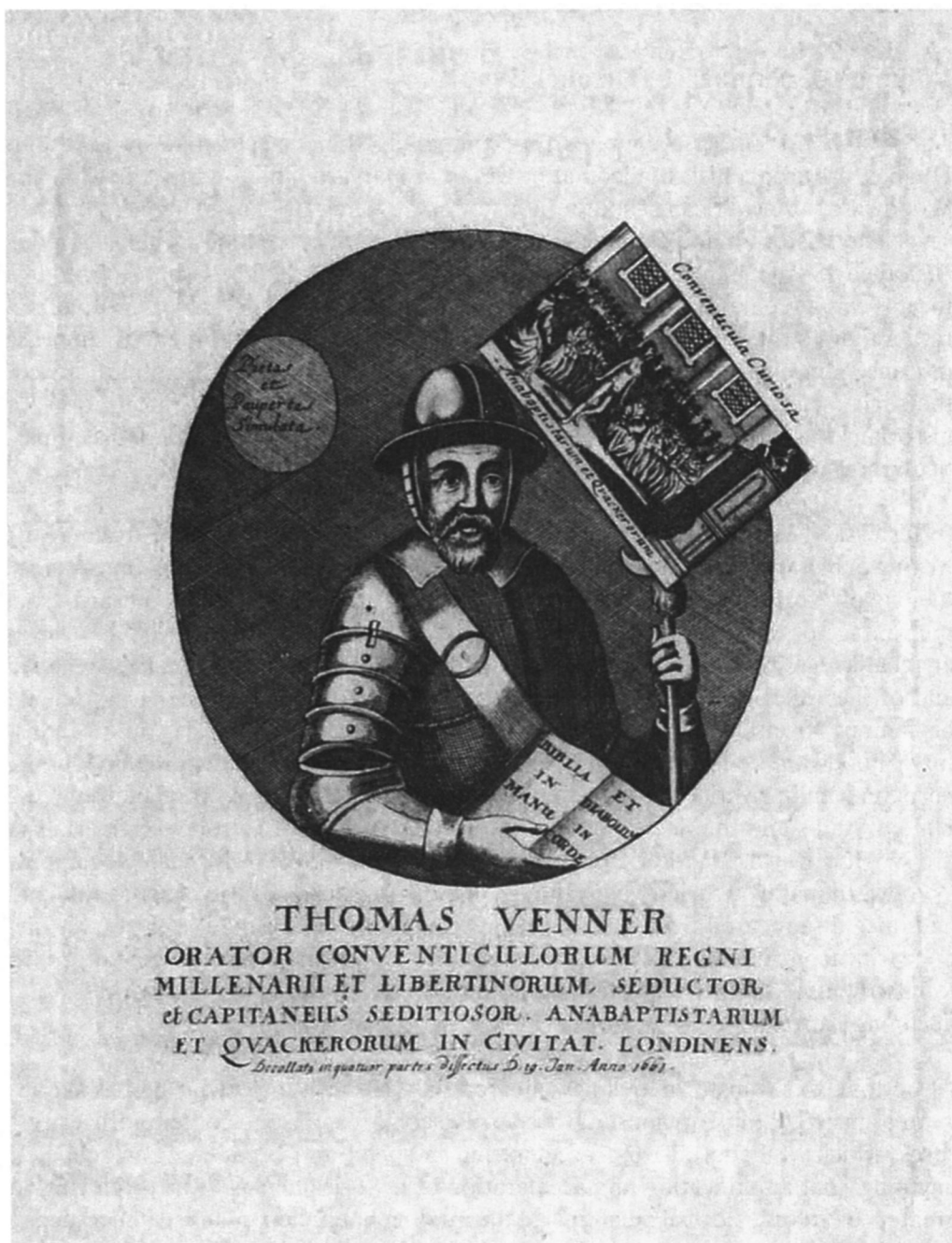


FIGURE 1: In 1637, the antinomian wine cooper Thomas Venner migrated to New England, where he served in the Bay Colony militia. Inspired by the prospect of thoroughgoing reformation in revolutionary England, he returned to London in 1651 and entered the radical republican underground. By 1654, he had joined the millenarian Fifth Monarchist movement, which opposed the Protectorate regime of Oliver Cromwell as another form of kingly government. In January 1661, Venner led his London Fifth Monarchist cell in a four-day rebellion to overthrow the newly restored king, Charles II. In the course of the fighting, Venner's forces attacked the Comptor Prison in Wood Street and attempted to free the prisoners to rescue them from potential transportation to the colonies to work as "bond slaves." In tracts written before the rising, the rebels condemned the trade "in the slaves and souls of men" and prophesied the doom of those who engaged in this traffic. Shortly after their capture on the fourth day of battle, Venner and ten of his followers were hanged, drawn, and quartered. Prints such as this quickly followed, depicting Venner as a traitorous fanatic. He would not be the last abolitionist to be vilified in such terms. Engraving by unknown artist, 1861. From Charles Knowles Bolton, *The Founders: Portraits of Persons Born Abroad Who Came to the Colonies in North America before the Year 1701*, 3 vols. (Boston, 1919), 3: 827.

“Out of the Land of Bondage”: The English Revolution and the Atlantic Origins of Abolition

JOHN DONOGHUE

IN 1646 THE TEENAGER Charles Bayly wandered through the Thames-side town of Gravesend on his way to London, joining thousands of other people streaming into the capital after being uprooted by the chaos of the English Revolution.¹ As he wrote years later, in Gravesend he

met with one Bradstreet, who was commonly called a spirit, for he was one of those who did entice children and people away for Virginia; he fell into discourse with me, and I being in tender years, he did cunningly get me on board a ship, which was then there riding ready for to go to those parts, and I being once on board, could never get on shore, until I came to America, where I was sold as a bond-slave for 7 years.

Reflecting on his subsequent life in the Chesapeake, Bayly described his plight:

[I endured] hunger, cold, nakedness, beatings, whippings, and the like . . . for many times was I stripped naked, and tied up by the hand, and whipped, and made to go barefoot and bare-legged in cold and frosty weather, and hardly clothes to cover my nakedness, besides the sore and grievous labor which I was continually kept at during which time my poor soul would be

The author thanks the anonymous readers for the *American Historical Review* for their insightful commentaries and articles editor Jane Lyle for her skill and diligence. He also thanks the following for their comments on earlier drafts of this article: David Armitage, Bernard Bailyn, Denver Brunsman, Robert Bucholz, Bernard Capp, Seymour Drescher, Betsy Erikla, Timothy Gilfoyle, Michael Goode, Jeffrey Hegleson, Peter Kotowski, Eric Slauter, Albert Vogt, Betty Wood, and Alfred Young. The author also expresses gratitude to the people who have encouraged this project throughout its many stages: Desa Amos, Kevin Bales, Charlotte Carrington, Todd DePastino, Laura Donoghue, William Fusfield, Alison Games, Elliot Gorn, Janelle Greenberg, Richard Huzzey, Evelyn Jennings, Eric Kimball, Wim Klooster, Peter Linebaugh, John McManamon, S.J., Simon Middleton, Ty Reese, Seth Rockman, Jonathan Scott, Billy G. Smith, and the Spring 2009 students of History 300: Slavery and Abolition—Then and Now. Most of all, the author wishes to thank Marcus Rediker for his close readings of the article's successive drafts, for many illuminating conversations about their content and historiographic implications, and for the new courses he has charted for studying history from below.

¹ Early modern historians disagree on what to call the political and social upheavals that swept across Britain and Ireland during the mid-seventeenth century. Some doubt that a “revolution” in England even took place. For the purposes of this article, the phrase “English Revolution” describes the political and social events from 1640 to 1660 that led to the abolition of the monarchy and episcopacy and the establishment of an English “commonwealth” or “republic” that embraced a relatively wide degree of religious toleration and attempted to transform England's Atlantic colonies into a well-ordered empire. For a recent overview of the concept of an English Revolution, see Nicholas Tyacke, “Introduction: Locating the ‘English Revolution,’” in Tyacke, ed., *The English Revolution, c.1590–1720: Politics, Religion and Communities* (Manchester, 2007).

often bemoaning itself concerning my sore captivity and misery . . . I had hard labor, and my daily exercise was beyond the common manner of slaves, for mine was often night and day.²

Although his master tried to break his spirit through such brutal treatment, Bayly remained strong, resisted, and briefly managed to escape. Upon his subsequent capture, a colonial court punished him by doubling his seven-year term of service, notwithstanding the fact that this sentence contradicted both English statute and common law regarding servants.³ While in Gravesend, Bayly had fallen victim to an illegal form of enslavement called “spiriting”; but once transported to the Chesapeake, he legally became the temporary, chattel property of his owner, although this too violated English labor law. Within one context, the imperial, Bayly’s chattel status remained ambiguous, but within another context, his own lived experience, he conveyed his position on the plantation with precision: he called himself a “bond slave.” Referring to those who labored beside him in what he described as “Maryland in Virginia,” he wrote movingly, “the poor creatures had better have been hanged, than to suffer the death and misery they did.”⁴

Bayly underwent this traumatic experience during the 1640s and early 1650s, when laborers from Britain and Ireland dominated the Chesapeake’s plantation workforce. On Barbados, during the same time that Bayly languished in Maryland, the seaman Henry Whistler described the plight of the permanently enslaved who were just then beginning to equal and perhaps outnumber “Christian” servants on the island.⁵ “The gentry here . . . have most of them 100 or 2 or 3 slaves a piece whom they command as they please . . . with ingones [indians] and miserable negors . . . borne to perpetual slavery they and their seed . . . they sell them one to the other as we sell sheep.”⁶ Writing on the treatment that “Christian” workers endured on Barbados during the same period, Richard Ligon noted, “I have seen such cruelty there done to servants, as I did not think one Christian could have done to another”; “servants” with the worst masters, he observed, “were not able to endure such slavery.”⁷ As these accounts from Bayly, Whistler, and Ligon illustrate, contemporaries clearly distinguished between the “perpetual” enslavement of Africans and Native Americans and the temporary slavery of European workers. Importantly, however, they all construed “Christians,” “negors,” and “ingones” as laboring under various forms of colonial slavery. Despite this and other well-documented contemporary

² Charles Bayly, *A True and Faithful Warning unto the People and Inhabitants of Bristol* (London, 1663), 8–9.

³ Alice M. Johnson, “Bayly, Charles,” in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online, http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=49. Bayly’s name was also variously spelled as Baily and Bailey.

⁴ Bayly, *A True and Faithful Warning*, 9.

⁵ Contemporaries used “Christian,” “negro” (in various forms), and “savage” to demarcate European, African, and Native American workers, respectively, more regularly than “white” or “black.” I will use these terms instead of “white” and “black” to be consistent with seventeenth-century usage as well as to avoid imposing more concrete and therefore antagonistic racial identities upon these workers than they themselves would have assumed.

⁶ British Library, Sloane Mss 3926, fol. 8. This manuscript contains Henry Whistler’s journal entries detailing the Cromwellian invasion of the Caribbean from the winter of 1654 through the summer of 1655.

⁷ Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (London, 1657), 31; quoted in Susan Dwyer Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640–1700* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2007), 60. Ligon’s observations stem from his sojourn on Barbados, which lasted from 1647 to 1650.

perceptions that they worked as slaves, and in the face of the objective chattel status imposed upon Bayly and tens of thousands of others from Britain and Ireland, almost all scholars of the English Atlantic limit their conceptualization of colonial slavery to the perpetual bondage endured by Native Americans and Africans.

The standard method used to evaluate slavery in the English Atlantic during the seventeenth century has proceeded from a definition of what the practice became in the eighteenth century: an institution of racialized, perpetual bondage. Yet this is a mistaken approach that removes people such as Charles Bayly and tens of thousands of others like him from the literal history of colonial slavery. By taking the views of contemporaries seriously, and through a brief foray into the global history and sociology of slavery, we can recast mid-seventeenth-century "indentured servitude" in the English Atlantic as a form of slavery that existed alongside the perpetual enslavement of Native Americans and people of African heritage. Instead of trying to study "slavery" in the seventeenth-century English Atlantic, we ought to begin grappling with how the drive to maximize profits in the early plantation complex gave rise to different "slaveries."⁸

To do so, however, we must move beyond contested definitions to explore how contemporaries understood and even opposed the rise of multiple forms of slavery in England's seventeenth-century colonies. Indeed, as England's revolutionary regimes worked to build their burgeoning empire on the foundation of colonial slave societies, the conceptual power of defining the Englishman's "freeborn" status against different forms of political and economic "slavery" gained new potency, in both England and the colonies. We can trace the activities of a transatlantic network of radicals, undocumented by other scholars, who infused condemnations of economic slavery into their struggles against the "slavery" of arbitrary government in New and Old England during the English Revolution. Although scholars usually consider abolitionist thought and action to have originated in the late eighteenth century, the origins of abolition in the English Atlantic can actually be located in the mid-seventeenth century. This point bears on a much larger one, namely how, within the long, sordid sweep of slavery's global history, people came to challenge the ancient idea that the freedom of some could be built upon the enslavement of others.

Scholars have long questioned the value of determining historical "origins." One of the *Annales* school's most celebrated practitioners, Marc Bloch, famously doubted whether the concept of origins was even historically valid.⁹ Bloch argued that historical "firsts" cannot represent "origins," because firsts depend in some way upon

⁸ Peter Kolchin has urged scholars to become more attuned to the varieties of perpetual bondage that Africans and their descendants endured in the colonies, writing that it "is increasingly clear that we must come to grips not so much with slavery as with slaveries." See Kolchin's article "Variations of Slavery in the Atlantic World," *William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2002): 551–554, quote on 551. I agree with Kolchin, but would widen the spectrum of slaveries to include the bond slavery endured mostly by Europeans, and more rarely, Africans and Native Americans.

⁹ See Marc Bloch, "The Idol of Origins," in Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (Manchester, 1992), 24–29. The first English edition of this work appeared in 1954. David Armitage offers a useful reflection on the concept of origins in *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000), 5–7: "The origins of a concept, as of any other object of historical inquiry, are not necessarily connected to any later outcome, causally or otherwise . . . Conversely, present usage or practice offers no sure guide to the origins of a concept or activity." This nicely encapsulates my own conceptualization of the origins of abolition in the English Atlantic, as abolition in the seventeenth century did not necessarily "cause" the movement to flourish in the late eighteenth century. What connects both across time is the substance

earlier developments for their existence. Holding that “a historical phenomenon can never be understood apart from its moment in time,” he went on to construe the search for origins as an irrational “obsession.” In his view, the long-term chronological comparisons upon which the search for origins rests depend in turn upon a fallacy that historical phenomena can be replicated substantially over time.¹⁰ Yet empirical research shows that the origins of historical phenomena can be traced, and while it remains critical to understand these subjects within their own historical context, viewing them in a chronologically comparative context only heightens their significance or their lack thereof. Without this comparative perspective, the historian’s craft, which necessarily evaluates continuity and change over time, becomes nearly impossible. Bloch’s commandment would reduce history to a series of discrete events impossible to connect to one another without falling into an abyss of anachronism.

In trying to locate the origins of abolition, we need not follow the history of abolition movements from the mid-seventeenth century to the late eighteenth. It is sufficient to trace their beginnings to the mid-seventeenth century and to demonstrate their conceptual and contextual similarities to abolitionism in the late eighteenth century. Establishing this point requires a working definition of abolition, which is understood here to mean an organized attempt to outlaw or otherwise end the institutions of slave-trading and/or slavery. With the notable exception of Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker’s *The Many-Headed Hydra*, a rough consensus exists among scholars of the English Atlantic that abolitionism first arose in the region as a single-issue movement.¹¹ Historians of abolition customarily and rightly differentiate between this late-eighteenth-century abolitionism and the “antislavery” literature of the late seventeenth century. Those best known for expressing antislavery views before the eighteenth century—Morgan Godwyn, Thomas Tryon, and Richard

of the concept of abolition, the acted-upon desire to end slavery and/or slave-trading in the English Atlantic.

¹⁰ Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, 24–25, 29.

¹¹ Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, 2000). This article would have been impossible without the pioneering work of Linebaugh and Rediker, whose book on the lives of working people in the early modern British Atlantic represents a triumph of the evidence of lived experience over the mythology of imperial ideology. The authors view the radicalism of the English Revolution largely as a project to abolish different forms of political tyranny and economic unfreedom. The revolution’s radical legacy, according to Linebaugh and Rediker, fortified by the inspirational example of slave revolts, helped shape abolitionist thought in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In contrast to these two historians, most scholars understand abolitionism as an eighteenth-century phenomenon, although they disagree over whether abolitionists were motivated more by altruism or by political and economic self-interest. Eric Williams’s *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1944) advanced the now classic but much-disputed argument that the decline of the West Indian sugar industry rather than humanitarian concern drove the abolitionist movement forward to its ultimate political success. Seymour Drescher’s *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh, 1977) and *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (New York, 1987) effectively challenged the Williams thesis by showing that the abolition of slavery came at the zenith of sugar’s profitability. Other important works on abolition include Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760–1810* (New York, 1975); David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1987); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (New York, 1999); and Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2006). See Brown, *Moral Capital*, 12–32; and David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York, 2006), 231–249, for invaluable historiographic overviews of abolitionism in the British Empire.

Baxter—all criticized the harshness of slavery, and while they did not call for an end to the institution itself, they did provide critical insights into its inequities that later abolitionists also exploited.¹²

In contrast to the abolitionists of the late eighteenth century who pursued their objective in single-minded fashion, transatlantic radicals during the age of the English Revolution embedded their calls for the end of slavery within larger political projects. But while significant differences exist between the two periods of abolitionism, the similarities seem more revealing. As Christopher Leslie Brown argues in his important book *Moral Capital*, the imperial crisis of the American Revolution figured prominently in the advent of late-eighteenth-century abolition, as the British, principally the English among them, began to question the substance of what made them a free people. The same kind of questioning can be discerned in the midst of an earlier, mid-seventeenth-century imperial crisis that trended, albeit on a much smaller scale, in parallel abolitionist fashion. To describe this development as constituting the "origins" of abolition in the English Atlantic thus seems fair because (a) it represented the first clear, organized call to end slavery and slave-trading in the region; (b) people in both the mid-seventeenth and the late eighteenth centuries articulated the substance of abolitionism, namely the clear, organized call to end slavery and slave-trading; and (c) imperial crises played an important role in facilitating abolitionist activity in both the mid-seventeenth and the late eighteenth centuries, providing roughly similar contexts that can help explain the rise of abolition in two distinct historical periods.

In most works on abolition, a widespread problem exists in reducing the concept of slavery to what it became in the eighteenth-century empire: an institution of permanent, racialized chattel bondage. But this type of slavery evolved from earlier variants in the seventeenth century that formed a complex system of bondage in which race had yet to become the defining feature of chattel status. Taking the English Atlantic as a whole in the mid-seventeenth century, those who served fixed terms as the chattel property of plantation owners outnumbered the permanently enslaved.¹³ Subsequently, to understand the origins of abolition in the empire, we need

¹² Philippe Rosenberg, "Thomas Tryon and the Seventeenth-Century Dimensions of Antislavery," *William and Mary Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (2004): 609–642; Daniel Carey, "Sugar, Colonialism, and the Critique of Slavery: Thomas Tryon in Barbados," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 9 (2004): 303–321; Alden T. Vaughan, "Slaveholders' 'Hellish Principles': A Seventeenth-Century Critique," in Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience* (New York, 1995), 55–81; Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, 39–49; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (New York, 1988), 204–206, 307, 339–341.

¹³ Between 1650 and 1660, 50,251 people from Britain and Ireland and elsewhere in Europe arrived in the English Chesapeake and Caribbean. During the same period, 40,726 people of African descent were imported, mostly to the Caribbean. Since the rate of white migration greatly outpaced that of blacks during the preceding decades of English colonization, and since anywhere from one-half to three-quarters of white migrants during the entire period under discussion came as "servants," colonial white workers continued to outnumber black workers during the period of the English Revolution, ca. 1640–1660. Importantly, black workers on Barbados came to outnumber white workers by the late 1650s or early 1660s; this did not occur in the Chesapeake until the 1690s. For colonial migration statistics, see David Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America: An Economic Analysis* (New York, 1984), 216–218, tables H3 and H4. It has been estimated that a total of 125,271 people migrated out of England between 1651 and 1661. Besides the colonies, most left for Ireland or the European mainland. See E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541–1871: A Reconstruction* (London, 1981), 227.

to understand how slavery began there. This in turn requires a workable definition of slavery itself.

Scholars of both historical and modern slavery define the institution broadly as the legal or illegal holding of people against their will through violence or the threat thereof, to labor as the chattel property of their so-called owners, for whose economic benefit they are forced to work.¹⁴ When placing slavery in the context of other extreme power relationships, the sociologist Orlando Patterson, perhaps the most celebrated theorist of slavery, describes “social death” as the institution’s most salient feature. Masters tried to impose “social death” by attempting to obliterate the personhood of their slaves, to make enslaved persons an extension of their wills, a process intended to deny the enslaved individual autonomy and sustainable membership within communities that vivify social life. But as Vincent Brown has reminded us in a compelling critique of Patterson’s thesis, the “political history” of slave resistance preserved the humanity of the enslaved as individuals and as a community in the face of the “social death” that their masters wished to impose.¹⁵ As Patterson and many others have observed, some type of slavery has existed in most if not all of the world’s societies. Continuing into our own time, slavery has taken many different forms over its protracted global history. Not all of those who are forced to perform unfree labor as chattels necessarily endure the condition for life. The forms of slavery practiced today, as well as in the former Ottoman Empire and by past societies of Africans and Native Americans, among others, speak to this point. Kevin Bales, the world’s leading authority on modern slavery, calls today’s slaves “disposable people,” because their owners usually discard them after their labor loses profitability.¹⁶

While scholars have long recognized the different forms that slavery has assumed, seldom if ever has this knowledge been used to deconstruct the term “indentured servitude” and reconstruct it in its mid-seventeenth-century context as an outright form of temporary chattel slavery that existed in tandem with the permanent enslavement of Africans and Native Americans. “Indentured servant” is hardly an objective signifier, as those who employ it unwittingly follow the lead of the slaveholders themselves, who concealed the slavery they imposed on the people they bought and sold from Britain and Ireland under the rhetorical cloak of the tradition of English service, partly as a way to shield themselves from well-informed contemporary criticism that they had made “slaves” out of Christians.¹⁷ Despite the entrenched place

¹⁴ Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 30; Kevin Bales, *Ending Slavery: How We Free Today’s Slaves* (Berkeley, Calif., 2007), 9–12.

¹⁵ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), 21–27; Vincent Brown, “Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery,” *American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (December 2009): 1231–1249.

¹⁶ The enslaved of these societies were often held in bondage temporarily, frequently for the purposes of ransom. They could marry into the families that held them or other free families, and they could sometimes become fully integrated members of their societies; moreover, children did not necessarily inherit the slave status of their parents. Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor, eds., *Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman Borders: Early Fifteenth–Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden, 2007); Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge, 1983); James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2002). For modern slavery, see Kevin Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* (Berkeley, Calif., 2004).

¹⁷ For examples, see William Bullock, *Virginia Impartially Examined, and Left to Public View* (London,

the term holds in the lexicon of early American and English Atlantic studies, it is unsatisfactory for this particular period. A more apt term is "bond slave."

This problem of how to categorize temporary chattel workers intersects with the controversies surrounding the origins of slavery in the English Atlantic, where historians have questioned whether race, as a social construct, constituted the driving force in the institution's evolution. Arguing from the position that material conditions give rise to history, some scholars see race as an ideological by-product of slavery rather than its progenitor. Others view the ideological construct of race as a powerful force in the very creation of colonial slavery, which in turn helped to define "whiteness" and its attendant privileges.¹⁸ A second, related argument concerns why Europeans turned to the enslavement of Africans when they could plausibly have enslaved other Europeans more cheaply.¹⁹ Despite the disparate positions

1649), 13–14; and Martin Noell's remarks before Parliament in March 1659, in John Towill Rutt, ed., *The Diary of Thomas Burton, Esq.* (London, 1828), 258–259.

¹⁸ "Origins" literature is too prolific to cite comprehensively. For perhaps the most famous exposition of the materialist position, see Barbara Fields, "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America," *New Left Review* 181 (1990): 95–118; for the same concerning race as an ideological catalyst in slavery's development, see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York, 1991). In *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1996), Kathleen M. Brown convincingly showed the importance of gender's role in shaping the emerging racialization of slavery. The works cited above drew on earlier scholarship, most notably the following: Oscar and Mary Handlin, "Origins of the Southern Labor System," *William and Mary Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1950): 199–222; Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1968); Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York, 1975); T. H. Breen and Stephen Innes, "Myne Owne Ground": *Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640–1676* (New York, 1980). For a review of the origins debate, see Alden T. Vaughan, "The Origins Debate: Slavery and Racism in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," in Colin A. Palmer, ed., *The Worlds of Unfree Labour: From Indentured Servitude to Slavery* (Aldershot, 1998). For concise and illuminating treatments of the rise of slavery in the early English Atlantic, see Betty Wood, *The Origins of American Slavery: Freedom and Bondage in the English Colonies* (New York, 1998). Michael Guasco emphasizes the "slavishness" of indentured servitude in "From Servitude to Slavery," in Toyin Falola and Kevin D. Roberts, eds., *The Atlantic World, 1450–2000* (Bloomington, Ind., 2008), 69–95; for the mainland colonies in particular, see Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and Servitude in Colonial North America: A Short History* (New York, 2001). My own views on the origins debate were most informed by the work of Theodore Allen, Hilary McD. Beckles, Peter Linebaugh, and Marcus Rediker, as they all come close to arguing that multiple forms of slavery existed side by side in the early English Atlantic. Allen's stunningly impressive archival research in his two-volume *The Invention of the White Race* (New York, 1994, 1997) allowed him to trace the origins of both slavery and race in minute detail, charting with empirical precision the process by which Chesapeake planters were able to render their "Christian" and "negro" servants into various forms of chattel property, and how this in tandem with the culture of resistance that European and African workers formed together made it difficult for the modern notion of "race" to take hold among the unfree in the Chesapeake for most of the seventeenth century. The work of the prolific Hilary McD. Beckles is also deeply immersed in archival material. Beckles convincingly emphasizes the importance of the chattelization of workers from Britain and Ireland on seventeenth-century Barbados, and how this related to the rise of black slavery there as well as a tradition of combined resistance among black and white workers. In *The Many-Headed Hydra*, Linebaugh and Rediker drew out these features of Allen's and Beckles's work on an Atlantic canvas, depicting with empirical rigor a deeply human portrait of both the enormous monstrosity of slavery and the ingenious resilience of those who resisted it.

¹⁹ Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (New York, 1997), 315–331; Seymour Drescher, "White Atlantic? The Choice for African Slave Labor in the Plantation Americas," in David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis, and Kenneth L. Sokoloff, eds., *Slavery in the Development of the Americas* (Cambridge, 2004), 31–69; David Eltis, "Europeans and the Rise and Fall of African Slavery in the Americas: An Interpretation," *American Historical Review* 98, no. 5 (December 1993): 1399–1423; Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (New York, 2000), 63–70.

taken in these debates, they all assume that the rise of slavery in the English colonies began with the transition from so-called indentured servitude to a system that placed mainly people of African descent in perpetual bondage.²⁰ But if we shift the debate away from a definition of slavery that equates it with perpetual chattel bondage, we can see that slavery began in the English Atlantic when planters first rendered “Christians,” “negros,” and “savages” into chattels during the 1615–1619 period.²¹ Initially, race did not determine the distinction between slave and free; crucially, however, as early as 1640, colonial courts began constructing racial identities to determine who could be enslaved for a fixed term and who could be enslaved for life.²² Perhaps, then, a more precise way to frame one aspect of the origins debate would be to explore why the English plantocracy chose not to reduce their “Christian” workers from Europe to perpetual slavery. In view of bond slavery’s significance as the first, dominant form of chattel labor in the English Atlantic, where the world’s largest slaveholding empire eventually took root, we should move beyond the idea that the seventeenth-century transition from a majority of “Christian” to “negro” unfree workers involved a clear changeover from the use of servants to the use of slaves. In the end, this interpretation distorts what should otherwise be understood as a series of incremental innovations in an increasingly exploitative, capitalist labor system in which multiple forms of chattel slavery eventually crystallized by the eighteenth century into a dominant form of racialized, permanent slavery.

Bond slavery, as Charles Bayly’s poignant testimony reveals, involved the attempted imposition of social death that Patterson found so characteristic of slavery. This can be explained by comparing the practice to the English tradition of service. Servants working in England occupied a clearly defined place within English society; they bound themselves freely to masters or were bound through the consent of their parents for fixed terms of service regulated by statute and common law.²³ But research has shown that voluntary migration to the colonies declined precipitously during the era of the English Revolution. The demand for unfree labor, in contrast, simultaneously increased, due in part to the expansion of tobacco cultivation in the Chesapeake, but more directly to the advent of profitable sugar production in the

²⁰ See Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670–1717* (New Haven, Conn., 2002), for the notable exception of the Carolina Lowcountry, where systemic Indian enslavement preceded the same for people of African descent.

²¹ A possible starting point might be November 1619, when John Rolfe described the buying and selling of English workers in Virginia. S. M. Kingsbury, ed., *Records of the Virginia Company of London*, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1906–1935), 3: 336. Allen quotes Rolfe’s description of this process in *The Invention of the White Race*, 2: 80. Governor Samuel Argall, however, introduced temporary slavery for colonists as a legal punishment in 1617. For probably the first shipment of enslaved Africans into the English Atlantic in 1619, see Engel Sluiter, “New Light on the ‘20 and Odd Negroes’ Arriving in Virginia, August 1619,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (1997): 395–398; and Arthur Percival Newton, *The Colonising Activities of the English Puritans: The Last Phase of the Elizabethan Struggle with Spain* (1914; repr., Port Washington, N.Y., 1966), 21–23.

²² In 1640, John Punch, a person of African descent, was sentenced to lifetime slavery in Virginia for running away with two bond slaves of European extraction. The latter were sentenced to flogging. This can be interpreted as the first legal sanctioning of lifelong slavery in the Chesapeake. The de facto practice developed much earlier on Bermuda, Barbados, and St. Kitts. See Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, 1: 179. Barbados passed its first comprehensive slave code in 1661, fashioned out of earlier slave laws. See *Acts of Assembly, Passed in the Island of Barbadoes, from 1648 to 1718* (London, 1721).

²³ I have learned much concerning the differences between English bound service and colonial unfree labor from Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 107–144.

Caribbean.²⁴ As a result, a system of involuntary migration rapidly matured in the mid-seventeenth-century English Atlantic. While deception and coercion always figured in the supply of the colonial workforce, during the English Revolution they became the main means by which recruiters, merchants, planters, and the state mobilized the supply of plantation bond slaves. New words such as "spiriting," "Barbadosed," and later "kidnapping" entered the English language, denoting the fraudulent and violent practices by which people from Britain and Ireland were lured or forced away from their own communities and coerced into colonial bond slavery. Plantation bond slaves were then subjected to longer terms of service and harsher conditions of labor discipline than English statute or common law allowed. Some historians of slavery in the early English Atlantic deny that so-called indentured servants, even as chattel property, were slaves, because, allegedly, only the workers' contracts, rather than the workers themselves, were sold. But as Patterson has written and as Linebaugh and Rediker noted in their discussion of bond slavery, "the distinction, often made, between selling their labor as opposed to selling their persons makes no sense whatsoever in human terms."²⁵ We should privilege these human terms to study "indentured servitude" or bond slavery as an embodied experience rather than as a reflection of disembodied contract law. The suffering and exploitation endured by bond slaves such as Charles Bayly tells us more about the nature of unfree colonial labor than his contract does, which in any case he did not enter into voluntarily, just like tens of thousands of other plantation workers. The distinction between the sale of a contract and the sale of a person represents a legal fiction, and certainly made no sense to these workers, since their bodies and not their contracts were forced to labor for a new master as his chattel property. Bond slavery, however, was certainly not the same thing as perpetual slavery. Contemporaries used the term "bond slave" to signify a discrete condition of chattelized labor, one that differentiated the status of the temporarily enslaved from the permanently enslaved as well as from those bound to service in Britain and Ireland. Unfortunately, historians have not made use of this contemporary language often enough when exploring the initial phase of slavery's development in the English Atlantic. This terminology remains instructive for us in the present, however, when we note that contemporaries recognized that "Christians," "negros," and "savages" from around the Atlantic world could be subjected to multiple forms of enslavement there and beyond.²⁶

The seventeenth-century English viewed the enslavement of their own people

²⁴ See Carla Gardina Pestana's richly researched *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640–1661* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 183–212, esp. 186–190, for the decline in voluntary migration and the upsurge in the traffic of coerced unfree labor from Britain and Ireland and Africa during the revolutionary era.

²⁵ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 9.

²⁶ For bond slavery in the Chesapeake, see Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, 2: 1–147. April Lee Hatfield recognizes that the bond labor regime in Virginia stemmed from exploitative innovations to the English apprenticeship system. See Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia, 2004), 135–143. Christine Daniels argues in a well-researched essay that indentured servitude in the seventeenth-century Chesapeake should not be viewed as a form of slavery because Maryland "servants" petitioned for better treatment, while slaves allegedly could not. See Daniels, "'Liberty to Complain': Servant Petitions in Maryland, 1652–1797," in Christopher L. Tomlins and Bruce H. Mann, eds., *The Many Legalities of Early America* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2001), 220–231. For bond slavery on Barbados, see Hilary McD. Beckles, "The Concept of 'White Slavery' in the English Caribbean during the Early Seventeenth Century," in John Brewer and Susan Staves, eds., *Early Modern*

within their own global context. In the Mediterranean, Muslim corsairs from Tunis, Algiers, and Morocco enslaved hundreds of thousands of Europeans during the early modern period, although many would ultimately be ransomed. Between 1609 and 1614, according to the research of Robert C. Davis, England alone lost 466 ships to these raids, resulting in the enslavement of thousands of English people in North Africa. Slaving raids also touched the British mainland: a single corsair venture on the Cornish coast in 1645 netted 240 slaves. Although the image of “the Turk” haunted the English mind during this period as a symbol of Christian enslavement, so too did the specter of the American colonies.²⁷ “It hath been a constant report among the ordinary sort of people that all those servants who are sent to Virginia are sold as slaves,” wrote the Virginia planter William Bullock in 1649. The London crowd acted on these constant reports, often pummeling into submission those who were accused of spiriting “servants” off the streets and “selling” them “beyond the seas” as “slaves.” Newspapers such as *Mercurius Elencticus* and *Mercurius Melancholicus* and political tracts such as *England’s Remembrancer* all cast the colonies as a place where “free born Englishmen” worked as “slaves.”²⁸

These accounts did not exaggerate. Like their African and Native American counterparts, workers from Britain and Ireland were auctioned, weighed on scales, and bought and sold, and they could be sold again for any reason during their term of service, often to pay off a master’s debts, sometimes from gambling. They were also whipped, branded, beaten, and starved. In one particularly appalling instance, an overseer reportedly forced a sick bond slave to dig his own grave to avoid pulling other workers away from the tobacco fields. Moreover, to maximize profits by expanding their dominion over their bond slaves, planters devised laws in Chesapeake and West Indian assemblies that lengthened the terms of unfreedom for Christian workers who committed infractions ranging from drunkenness and fornication to theft and running away. Servants convicted of crimes in Old England were punished according to normative statute and common law; their terms of service were not altered. In contrast, colonial courts levied sentences on Christian bond slaves that lengthened their terms of service while they imposed perpetual slavery on “negro” bond slaves.²⁹ As Christine Daniels’s research has revealed, mid-seventeenth-cen-

Conceptions of Property (London, 1995), 572–584; for a lengthier treatment, see Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627–1715* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1989).

²⁷ Robert C. Davis, “Counting European Slaves on the Barbary Coast,” *Past and Present* 172 (2001): 88 fn. 3 for the Cornwall raid, 90 for an estimate on the capture of English and Scottish shipping. For the image of the Turk in the early English mind, see Nabil Matar’s introduction to Daniel J. Vitkus, ed., *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York, 2001), 1–55.

²⁸ Bullock, *Virginia Impartially Examined*, 14; John Cordy Jeaffreson, *Middlesex County Records*, 4 vols. (London, 1888), 3: 306; for the newspapers cited, see Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, 188; *England’s Remembrancer* (London, 1656).

²⁹ *Acts of Assembly, Passed in the Island of Barbadoes*, 15–28, 39; David Barry Gaspar, “‘Rigid and Inclement’: Origins of the Jamaican Slave Laws of the Seventeenth Century,” in Tomlins and Mann, *The Many Legalities of Early America*, 78–96; Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, 183–212; Warren M. Billings, “The Law of Servants and Slaves in Seventeenth-Century Virginia,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 99 (1991): 45–62; Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, 2: 1–147, esp. 125–130; Beckles, “The Concept of ‘White Slavery,’” 572–583; Robert J. Steinfeld, *The Invention of Free Labor: The Employment Relation in English and American Law and Culture, 1350–1870* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1991), 3, 4, 44–46; Christopher Tomlins, “Reconsidering Indentured Servitude: European Migration and the Early American Labor Force, 1600–1775,” *Labor History* 42, no. 1 (2001): 5–43; Sharon

tury bond slaves in the small colony of Maryland could often expect courts to protect them from abusive masters, although Charles Bayly's testimony about his experience in Maryland suggests that many bond slaves ran away because they could not manage to launch a civil suit or because they believed they would not receive justice if they did. Others probably perished before opportunities for escape or a day in court arose. Regardless of a bond slave's expectations concerning the law, he or she still remained temporary chattel property, a condition that the ability to petition did not change.³⁰ Indeed, as the esteemed historian of West Indian slavery Gad Heuman concluded, even with special courts set up to hear the petitions of the "apprentices" or slaves liberated under Parliament's abolition law of 1833, "slavery did not come to an end in the Anglophone Caribbean."³¹ In the mid-seventeenth century, however, the crucial difference that usually separated the experiences of "Christian" and "negro" and "savage" workers, the potential for perpetual enslavement faced by the latter two, did not mean much to thousands of bond slaves from Britain and Ireland who died before their terms expired, making their life under bondage one of de facto as opposed to de jure permanency.³² Consequently, those in bonded service and those who sympathetically observed their brutal treatment used the term "servant" interchangeably with "slave," "bond slave," and "white negger" to describe the lived experience of colonial "servitude."³³ From the perspectives of workers and many others

V. Salinger, "Labor, Markets, and Opportunity: Indentured Servitude in Early America," *Labor History* 38, no. 2-3 (1997): 311-338; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 217-261.

³⁰ Daniels, "'Liberty to Complain,'" 220-232. Slaves in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American South petitioned courts and legislatures for various reasons, occasionally with success. See Loren Schweninger, ed., *The Southern Debate over Slavery*, vol. 1: *Petitions to Southern Legislatures, 1778-1864* (Chicago, 2001), xxvi, xxx; vol. 2: *Petitions to Southern County Courts, 1775-1867* (Chicago, 2008), 6, 18-20. The point here is threefold: First, the ability to petition does not negate slave status. Second, the low rate of successful petitions by the enslaved of African descent clearly demonstrates how much more the system of racialized slavery, in comparison to bond slavery, denied unfree workers a legitimate place in the community. Third, the fact that slaves in the American South did resort to petitioning reflects their self-definition as legitimate members of the community and thus their resistance to social death.

³¹ Gad Heuman, "Riots and Resistance in the Caribbean at the Moment of Freedom," in Howard Temperley, ed., *After Slavery: Emancipation and Its Discontents* (London, 2000), 135.

³² Before the late seventeenth century, Africans in the Chesapeake sometimes served as bond slaves. See Breen and Innes, *Myne Owne Ground*, 8-15. For high mortality rates among bond slaves, see Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, 2: 143 n. 180. Allen compares the mortality statistics of workers in contemporary and scholarly accounts of the seventeenth-century Chesapeake. For a contemporary estimate, see *The Invention of the White Race*, 2: 123 n. 41, where Allen quotes Governor William Berkeley, who noted for the period covering the revolution that not one in five workers from Britain and Ireland survived their first year in Virginia. For another contemporary estimate, see George Gardiner, *A Description of the New World; or, America Islands and Continent* (London, 1651), 99, where the author estimates that one of three Virginia migrants died in the first year, although he noted that some colonists reckoned the rate at eleven of every twelve.

³³ For examples of people in Britain and Ireland and throughout the empire using the term "slave" in reference to so-called indentured servants, see Jeaffreson, *Middlesex County Records*, 3: 306, 336; Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company*, 4: 235; Bullock, *Virginia Impartially Examined*, 13-14, 47; Bayly, *A True and Faithful Warning*, 8-9; *The Banner of Truth Displayed; or, A Testimony for Christ, and against Anti-Christ* (London, 1656), A2, 90; Lionel Gatford, *Publick Good without Private Interest* (London, 1657), 4-5; Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, 43-44; also quoted in Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 60. Jerome S. Handler and Lon Shelby, "A Seventeenth-Century Commentary on Labor and Military Problems in Barbados," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 34 (1973): 117-121. Handler and Shelby transcribed and edited a 1667 manuscript titled "Some Observations on the Island of Barbados." For "white negger" references, see Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776* (Gloucester, Mass., 1967),

in England and its colonies, even before the maturation of racial identities and the full-scale transition to racialized slavery in perpetuity, England's West Indian and Chesapeake colonies were slave societies rather than societies with slaves.³⁴

During the era of the English Revolution, the word "slavery" resonated powerfully in political as well as economic contexts. People on both sides of the political divide in England and the colonies chose the term to describe the condition that resulted from the loss of political liberty. Indeed, it is difficult to find a political pamphlet among the thousands written during the period that does not equate the effects of political tyranny with slavery. The tradition actually predates the English Revolution and is at least as old as the idea of the Norman Yoke, the notion that the conquest of 1066 permanently altered England's laws to accommodate the nobility and degrade the commons, a belief that persisted even after the new Norman ruling class had abolished England's last vestiges of economic slavery. As the pamphleteer John Warr wrote in the mid-seventeenth century, "When the poor and oppressed want right, they meet with law . . . Many times the very law is the badge of our oppression, its proper intention being to enslave the people."³⁵ As Warr's observation implies, the English perceived that liberty from tyranny represented the people's freedom from the slavery of arbitrarily applied state power.³⁶ During the English Revolution, both sides believed that citizens became slaves in a political sense when, without their consent and "contrary to nature," they were placed in subjection to rulers who pursued their own interests at the expense of the public good and the people's liberty. Parliament's allies described Charles I's "personal rule" as slavery, while those loyal to the king feared their own enslavement under a set of puritan upstarts seeking to gain the political whip hand. Historians Quentin Skinner

309; Vincent Harlow, *A History of Barbados, 1625–1685* (Oxford, 1926), 293; Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 18. Surveying the value of Irish land and labor after the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland, the Oxford mathematician and Royal Academy member William Petty worked out part of his pioneering calculus of early English political economy; "value[ing] the people in Ireland as slaves" according to the current £15 price of "negroes," the Irish could "be forced to as much labour, and as cheap fare, as nature will endure, and thereby become as two men added to the commonwealth, and not as one taken away from it." Petty developed this calculation to show the English government why enslaving the Irish who resisted the conquest of their country would be more profitable than killing them. See Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, 147, and Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, 75 n. 32, for the quote from William Petty's *The Political Anatomy of Ireland* (London, 1691).

³⁴ For the difference between societies with slaves and slave societies, see Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), 7–8. See Philip D. Morgan's *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1998), 1–26, for an impressive example of the widely accepted argument that slave societies were born in the English Atlantic when permanent, racialized slavery became dominant in the colonial labor force.

³⁵ Quoted in Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (New York, 1972), 218–219.

³⁶ Christopher Hill, "The Norman Yoke," in Hill, ed., *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1969). For more on John Warr's class-conscious critique of the English common law, see Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 216–222. For a broader survey of the early modern political tradition of the freeborn Englishmen that ranges beyond Hill's focus on radicalism, see David Underdown, *A Freeborn People: Politics and the Nation in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York, 1996). For the long-term historical and wide-ranging global reach of the English tradition of liberty, see Peter Linebaugh, *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All* (Berkeley, Calif., 2008). For a compact analysis of English traditions of liberty measured against political and economic slavery, see Betty Wood, "Freedom and Bondage in English Thought," in Wood, *The Origins of American Slavery*, 9–19.

and Jonathan Scott argued that republicans within the parliamentary fold, drawing on neo-Roman and Christian humanist sources of political thought, rejected a normative construct in English political thinking by defining prerogative political institutions as inherently tyrannical, since their potential to undermine the rule of law perpetually jeopardized the people's liberty and thus threatened the nation with enslavement.³⁷ Christopher Hill explained that republicans politicized the legend of the Norman Yoke to argue against monarchical government. Looking across the Atlantic, Carla Pestana illuminated how colonial merchants and planters appealed to the tradition of the "freeborn Englishmen" to protest their "enslavement" by new mercantile restrictions on "free trade" that the revolutionary government levied through the Navigation Acts.³⁸

Despite their ascent to power, England's revolutionaries soon found themselves dividing into factions over what shape the postwar political settlement should take. The most radical proposals for constitutional change came from the puritan sects that dominated the democratic Leveller movement and their allies in the New Model Army. Through a series of declarations and engagements (1647–1649), the Levellers and the mainstay of the soldiery united to support their proposed constitution, the *Agreement of the People*.³⁹ "To avoid . . . the danger of returning to a slavish con-

³⁷ Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1998), 1–100; Skinner, "Rethinking Political Liberty," *History Workshop Journal* 61, no. 1 (2006): 156–170; Skinner, "John Milton and the Politics of Slavery," in Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 2002), 2: 286–308; Jonathan Scott, *Commonwealth Principles: Republican Writing of the English Revolution* (New York, 2004), 151–169, 233–314. Before the civil wars, most English people agreed that the ancient constitution sanctioned the exercise of monarchical prerogative power, although celebrated jurists such as Edward Coke believed that this could still amount to tyranny if the king's use of the prerogative abridged the people's customary liberties. Therefore, when the fighting broke out in 1642, those opposed to the king were not necessarily enemies of the monarchical prerogative in principle. As Francis Seymour, member of the House of Commons, said in 1642, they feared the "dangers [that] ensue by want of privilege of Parliament . . . to bring the subjects under slavery. Whereby the King can neither be preserved in honour, nor the Commonwealth in safety." On the other hand, although many future Royalists had condemned Charles's personal rule, they feared during the 1640s that waging war against the king would obliterate the coordinate theory of power between king and Parliament at the heart of the ancient constitution. In 1649, the revolutionaries executed the king and abolished the monarchy, ostensibly freeing the nation from its enslavement by the "government of a single person." For the Seymour quote, see John Morrill, "Rhetoric and Action: Charles I, Tyranny, and the English Revolution," in Gordon Sochet, ed., with Patricia E. Tatspaugh and Carol Brobeck, *Religion, Resistance, and Civil War: Papers Presented at the Folger Institute Seminar "Political Thought in Early Modern England, 1600–1660"* (Washington, D.C., 1985), 93. For the ancient constitution and English conceptions of tyranny and freedom, see Janelle Greenberg, *The Radical Face of the Ancient Constitution: St. Edward's Laws in Early Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2001).

³⁸ Pestana's groundbreaking study represents the first monograph to synthesize the religious, political, and labor history of the English Atlantic during the revolutionary era. Her novel approach contrasts the miserable conditions of colonial "bound laborers" from Britain and Ireland with the "freeborn English" planters' protests against their "enslavement" by the Rump Parliament's mercantile policies, most specifically the Act of 1650 and the first Navigation Act (1651). See her *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, 183–210.

³⁹ The literature on the radical politics of this period is too voluminous to cite here. The following works explore the collaboration between the Levellers, the London sects, and the New Model Army that ultimately produced the first *Agreement of the People*: Ian Gentles, "The Agreements of the People and Their Political Contexts, 1647–1649," in Michael Mendle, ed., *The Putney Debates of 1647: The Army, the Levellers, and the English State* (Cambridge, 2001), 148–174; Samuel Dennis Glover, "The Putney Debates: Popular versus Elite Republicanism," *Past and Present* 164 (1999): 47–80; Michael A. Norris, "Edward Sexby, John Reynolds, and Edmund Chillenden: Agitators, 'Sectarian Grandees,' and the Relations of the New Model Army with London in the Spring of 1647," *Historical Research* 76, no. 191 (2003): 30–53.

dition,” the *Agreement* established a covenant of revolutionary principles that defined republican liberty against the servitude of state-mandated religious conformity and government by a king or “single person.” It also called for the abolition of military impressment, which the Leveller Richard Overton likened to the experience of a “Turkey galley slave.”⁴⁰ In the fall of 1647, after Lieutenant General Oliver Cromwell and his supporters in the army high command chose to table the *Agreement* after a series of debates with “agitators” or representatives elected by the soldiery, several regiments supported by the Levellers mutinied in Hertfordshire. They rebelled against the stifling of army democracy as well as their impressment for service in Ireland. Arrayed in defiant formation at Corkbush Field before Generals Cromwell and Thomas Fairfax, the soldiers carried copies of the *Agreement* and wore printed slogans in their hats reading “England’s Freedom—Soldiers’ Rights.” Viewing military labor as a sovereign foundation for citizenship, the men linked their acquisition of democratic political power to the country’s emancipation from political bondage. Soldiers in a “free state,” they declared, could not be “enslaved” to fight “against their consciences.” Unfortunately for the Levellers and their allies in the army, the army commanders suppressed the mutiny of 1647 and another in the spring of 1649 through the execution of low-ranking ringleaders.⁴¹

The Rump Parliament never ratified the *Agreement*, and by 1653 the deepest fears its supporters had expressed about the nation returning to a “slavish condition” appeared to materialize.⁴² In April, Cromwell forcibly dissolved the Rump Parliament and seemed complicit to many in the termination of its short-lived successor, the Nominated Assembly or “Barebones Parliament,” that December. Many English republicans interpreted the Council of State’s subsequent installation of Cromwell as Lord Protector as an arbitrary usurpation of parliamentary power that established monarchy by another name—in all, a betrayal of the revolution’s sacred covenants. Ominously, the *Instrument of Government*, or Protectorate constitution, written in secret by General John Lambert during the Barebones Parliament, effectively gave Cromwell and the Council of State control of the armed forces for two years.⁴³ To

⁴⁰ *An Agreement of the People* (London, 1647), in A. S. P. Woodhouse, ed., *Puritanism and Liberty: Being the Army Debates (1647–9) from the Clarke Manuscripts with Supplementary Documents*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1974), 443–445; for the Overton quote, see Richard Overton, *A Remonstrance of Many Thousand Citizens* (London, 1646), in Don M. Wolfe, ed., *Leveller Manifestoes of the Puritan Revolution* (New York, 1967), 124–125.

⁴¹ Holstun’s scholarship reifies and improves upon Christopher Hill’s treatment of the New Model Army’s radical politics. In terms of theoretical deconstruction, Holstun’s book poses a far-reaching and convincing challenge to Mark Kishlansky’s revisionist account of the New Model’s politics, where Kishlansky attempted to “debunk” Hill. Ian Gentles’s work on the army also compares favorably to Kishlansky’s, which depoliticizes the army’s internal conflicts and alleges that they showed little sign of significant ideological discord. See Holstun’s relentlessly insightful chapter on the politics of the New Model Army in *Ehud’s Dagger: Class Struggle during the English Revolution* (New York, 2000), 231–256, esp. 246–256 for the mutiny at Corkbush Field. See also Hill, “Agitators and Officers,” in *The World Turned Upside Down*, 57–72; Mark A. Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army* (1979; repr., New York, 1983); Ian Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland, and Scotland, 1645–1653* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).

⁴² By early 1649, the *Agreement* debated in the fall of 1647 had undergone two major revisions in subsequent negotiations between the Leveller leadership, elected army agitators, the General Council of army officers, and leaders from London’s radical puritan community headed by John Goodwin of Coleman Street. See Gentles, “The Agreements of the People and Their Political Contexts.”

⁴³ Barry Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate* (New York, 2002), 7–20; Austin Woolrych, *Commonwealth to Protectorate* (Oxford 1982), 364–378. For the troubled relationship between the Protec-

England's radical republicans, the nation remained trapped in a state of political bondage.

IN THE SPRING OF 1654, following England's victory in a popular naval war with the Dutch, Cromwell and the Council of State embarked on a project to spread English liberty abroad while uniting Protestant factions at home by laying low the "common enemy," Catholic Spain, both in Europe and in the heart of its American empire.⁴⁴ Moving beyond the blood-drenched battlegrounds of the Continent, the saints would open yet another front in the "New World" to perform their self-perceived providential duty to expand the "reformation work" of the revolution.⁴⁵ Drawing on the Black Legend, the regime justified its portended invasion of the West Indies as a crusade to liberate English sailors, colonists, Native Americans, and Africans from Spanish enslavement. Nonetheless, profits as well as providence inspired Cromwell's Caribbean ambitions, which amounted to nothing less than a systematic reorganization of the empire around a West Indian epicenter peopled by godly planters removed from New England. Through this "western design," as the venture became known, Cromwell hoped that puritans relocated from the North American continent would form the nucleus of a new-modeled slaveholding plantocracy. He transformed vision into policy after launching the expedition by sending his personal emissary, Daniel Gookin, to New England to persuade the region's puritan colonists to resettle in the Caribbean. There the Protector believed that English privateers and naval

torate regime and its Parliaments, see David L. Smith and Patrick Little, *Parliaments and Politics during the Cromwellian Protectorate* (Cambridge, 2007).

⁴⁴ This article focuses on the colonial front of Cromwell's wider naval war with Spain. For more on the European theater, see Timothy Venning, *Cromwellian Foreign Policy* (New York, 1995).

⁴⁵ For illuminating work on the western design, deeply immersed in the long and revealing history of puritan visions of Caribbean empire, see Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "'Errand into the Indies': Puritan Colonization from Providence Island through the Western Design," *William and Mary Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (1988): 70–99. For Cromwell's discussion of the western design with his Council of State, see S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, 1649–1656*, 4 vols. (London, 1894–1903), 3: 159; and C. H. Firth, ed., *The Clarke Papers: Selections from the Papers of William Clarke*, 4 vols. (London, 1891–1901), Appendix B, 3: 203–208. As Peter Gaunt has proven, Oliver Cromwell did not command the Council of State at will, but neither could his councilors easily resist his will when he chose selectively to impose it, as he did over the spring, summer, and fall of 1654 to launch his war of choice in the Spanish Caribbean. See Gaunt, "'The Single Person's Confidants and Dependents'? Oliver Cromwell and His Protectoral Councillors," in David L. Smith, ed., *Cromwell and the Interregnum: The Essential Readings* (Malden, Mass., 2003), 91–109. Gaunt doubts the veracity of the accounts of Cromwell's meetings with the Council of State on April 20 and July 20, 1654, documented in the *Clarke Papers*, because no corroborating evidence appears in the Interregnum order books for the first session, while the notes for the second session appear in the hand of a person who did not attend the meeting (108 fn. 35). Neither of these points effectively dismisses the evidence in the documents as inaccurate. The order books do not document every meeting conducted between the Protector and his councilors, particularly when the government tried to evolve secretive policies, as in this case. Moreover, contemporaries often made personal copies of notes and documents written by others. Other evidence exists, however, that illuminates the Protector's plans to put the nation on a war footing that spring. As early as May 1654, Cromwell commissioned letters of marque against Spanish shipping, ostensibly to avenge Spain's alleged enslavement of English sailors in the West Indies, an argument deployed later to justify the western design in *A Manifesto of the Lord Protector . . . Wherein Is Shown the Reasonableness of the Cause of This Republic against the Depredations of the Spaniards* (London, 1655). For the letters of marque, see the May 27, 1654, entry in George F. Steckley, ed., *The Letters of John Paige, London Merchant, 1648–58* (London, 1984), 108.

squadrons based on prosperous sugar-producing islands could easily pillage Spanish settlements and treasure ships.⁴⁶ Convinced by the writings of the renegade priest Thomas Gage, who described the riches the English might obtain in the West Indies by virtue of Spain's declining power, Cromwell clearly saw the brightest prospects for imperial profits in the West Indies. Consequently, the Protector turned to advisers with American experience to capitalize on these opportunities.⁴⁷ Most notable among them were the merchants Martin Noell, Thomas Povey, and Maurice Thompson, who trafficked in perhaps the Atlantic economy's most valuable "commodity," human beings from Africa and Britain and Ireland.⁴⁸ Cromwell and his supporters knew that merchants such as these could help resolve the most acute problem plaguing England's expansion into the Atlantic: the shortage of labor. Eventually, however, in the eyes of London's most militant republicans, Cromwell's reliance on these advisers would cast a disingenuous light on the expedition's emancipatory pretensions.

While the slaves and bond slaves supplied by Noell, Povey, Thompson, and others helped feed the rising demand for colonial labor, the exportation of commodified human beings also advanced the Council of State's clearly class-conscious vision of godly reformation. The war and the news that colonial masters treated their servants like slaves had severely diminished voluntary migration to the colonies.⁴⁹ Although the Council of State encouraged English merchants to venture into the African slave trade in 1650, England had yet to surpass the Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese in this base commerce. Consequently, with the state's sanction, the majority of the people whom Noell and others shipped to work on plantations during the revolution were orphans, convicts, and homeless people. Cleansing England of what the puritan regime regarded as the morally degenerate poor, Noell and his cohort funneled profits partly derived from the legal bond slave trade into loans that financed the Cromwellian government's wars.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Firth, *The Clarke Papers*, 3: 206–208; Thomas Birch, ed., *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe*, 7 vols. (London, 1742) [hereafter cited as *Thurloe Papers*], 5: 148, 6: 362; Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, 178–180. Cromwell also hoped that Caribbean and Chesapeake colonists would remove to newly conquered Jamaica; for the positive reception this initiative received on Antigua, see Bodleian Library, Rawlinson Mss A 37, fol. 15.

⁴⁷ For Cromwell's providential thinking and the Black Legend, see Thomas Fallon, "Cromwell and the Western Design," in Balachandra Rajan and Elizabeth Sauer, eds., *Milton and the Imperial Vision* (Pittsburgh, 1999), 133–154. Thomas Gage, *The English American: A New Survey of the West Indies* (London, 1648). See also Bodleian Library, Rawlinson Mss A 24, fol. 1, for Thomas Gage's 1654 paper to Oliver Cromwell, in which he urged the Protector to "proclaim liberty to all Negroes, Mulattos, and Indians." Gage advised emancipation not in abolitionist terms, but as a tactical expedient to weaken Spanish rule.

⁴⁸ Bodleian Library, Rawlinson Mss A 37, fol. 197; A 57, fols. 8–13; W. Noel Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, 1574–1660* (London, 1860) [hereafter cited as *CSPC 1574–1660*], 348, 362, 404, 421, 423, 425–427, 432, 433, 441, 443, 445, 446, 452, 463; Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, 168, 189; Charles Wilson, *England's Apprenticeship, 1603–1763* (London, 1984), 58, 130–132; Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550–1653* (Princeton, N.J., 1992), 163, 175–176, 192, 514, 589; Beckles, "The Concept of 'White Slavery,'" 574. Noell, despite his Cromwellian associations, became such a powerful financial figure in London that King Charles II knighted him in 1662. Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. G. Gregory Smith (London, 1905), 148.

⁴⁹ Johnson, "Bayly, Charles."

⁵⁰ *CSPC 1574–1660*, 389, 419, 421, 423, 427, 447, 448; Allen B. Hinds, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice*, 38 vols. (London, 1864–1947) [hereafter cited as *CSPV*], 30: 148; Charles Andrews, *British Committees, Commissions, and Councils of*

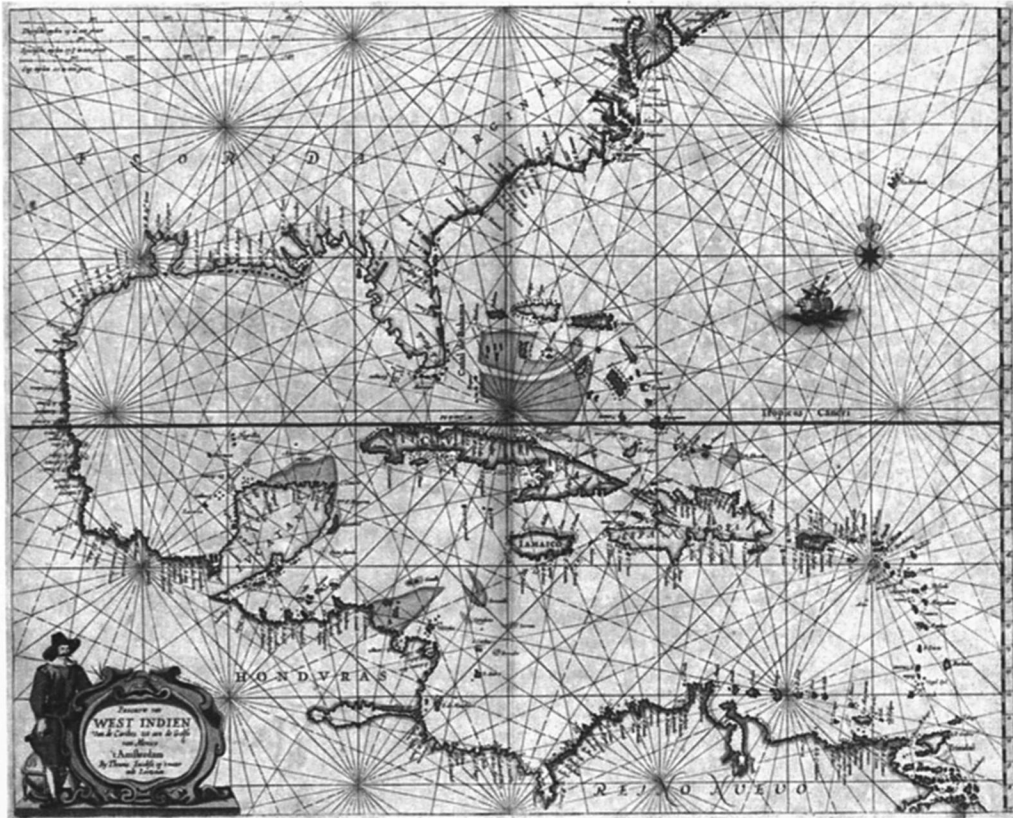


FIGURE 2: The Dutch cartographer Theunis Jacobz drew this map of the West Indies in 1654, the very year Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell commissioned the invasion of the region known as the western design. Cromwell's colonial advisers had convinced him that England's imperial future lay in the Caribbean. As government financiers, contractors, plantation owners, and traders in bond slaves and enslaved Africans, these advisers profited from the design, which opened the Protectorate government up to charges of corruption from its republican opponents. Theunis Jacobsz op't water inde Lootsman, *Pascaerte van West Indien van de Caribes tot aen de Golfo van Mexico* (Amsterdam, 1654). Image reproduced courtesy of Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps—www.RareMaps.com.

The regime also set out to transform its political enemies into imperial assets. The New Model Army had already sold thousands of captive Scottish rebels into bond slavery in the Americas. To realize the goals of the western design, Cromwell planned to send even more.⁵¹ His government treated Royalist insurgents in south-

Trade and Plantations, 1622–1675 (Baltimore, 1908), 45, 49–58, 63, 67–68; Maurice Ashley, *Financial and Commercial Policy under the Cromwellian Protectorate* (London, 1962), 115; G. E. Aylmer, *The State's Servants: The Civil Service of the English Republic, 1649–1660* (London, 1973), 75, 113, 250–251, 264; P. E. H. Hair and Robin Law, "The English in West Africa to 1700," in Nicholas Canny, ed., *The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 2001), 241–263. The policy of convict transportation to foreign countries began in 1597 during the reign of Elizabeth I. London's Common Council, Parliament, and James I's Privy Council began applying the policy to England's new Atlantic colonies during the 1615–1620 period. See "Poor Children to Be Sent to Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 6 (1898): 232; Peter Wilson Coldham, *Emigrants in Chains: A Social History of Forced Emigration to the Americas of Felons, Destitute Children, Political and Religious Non-Conformists, Vagabonds, Beggars, and Other Undesirables, 1607–1776* (Baltimore, 1992), 50.

⁵¹ Scottish prisoners of war were first transported to the colonies in 1648. See Leo Francis Stock, ed.,

ern England in the same fashion, as those who rose up in Salisbury with John Penruddock discovered to their misfortune in 1655.⁵² Catholics fared even worse during and after the republic's scorched-earth campaign in Ireland. "Tories," Catholic partisans and their families who resisted "transplantation" to Connaught, a province west of the River Shannon, either were killed or in thousands of cases were "transported" to England's American colonies, particularly Barbados, as it made the profitable transition from tobacco to sugar cultivation.⁵³ In 1655, as the western design unfolded, 12,000 Irish Catholics and political prisoners, criminals, orphans, and homeless from the British mainland were working on Barbados sugar plantations.⁵⁴

Even with these far-reaching innovations in the labor supply system, the state still could not meet colonial planters' rapacious demand for unfree workers. An illicit trade in bond slaves supplementing the state's transportation system arose to meet the profitable challenge. As William Bullock wrote during the revolution, men "nicknamed spirits" provided planters with "the usual way for getting servants."⁵⁵ In 1643, a year after the fighting began in England, the Virginia assembly noted that many laborers were arriving without indentures, a sure sign that they had been spirited into bondage. The House of Commons convened a committee to investigate the spirit trade the same year.⁵⁶ In 1645, 1646, and 1647, Parliament took successive and astonished note of the heavy volume of this illegal commerce and ordered customs officials, to no avail, to ensure that passengers boarded ships voluntarily.⁵⁷

Although Parliament hardly acted with effect to stop the black market trade that sold thousands of people such as Charles Bayly into bond slavery, it did collect evidence on how the trade worked when crowds brought accused kidnappers to its attention. In this way it was discovered that William Thiers, an East End shoemaker, inveigled 840 victims into colonial bond slavery. One spirit ring, working in London's

Proceedings and Debates of the English Parliaments Respecting North America, 1542–1688 (Washington, D.C., 1924), 206–207, 209–211; Firth, *The Clarke Papers*, 3: 205.

⁵² Rutt, *The Diary of Thomas Burton*, 244–253.

⁵³ See C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, eds., *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660*, 3 vols. (London, 1911), 2: 722, September 24, 1653, and 2: 293, June 23, 1654, for parliamentary acts concerning Irish Catholic land confiscation, transplantation, and transportation for forced labor in the colonies. For more on Irish transportation during the mid-seventeenth century, see Bodleian Library, Rawlinson Mss A 482, fols. 42–49; *CSPC 1574–1660*, 401, 407, 409, 419, 420, 426, 428, 430, 431, 441, 458, 481, 483, 487; Stock, *Proceedings and Debates*, 222. For new insights into the cultural and social history of the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland, set within an Atlantic and an even wider global context, see Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560–1660* (New York, 2008), chap. 8.

⁵⁴ Birch, *Thurloe Papers*, 4: 39–40.

⁵⁵ Bullock, *Virginia Impartially Examined*, 14. John Wareing, "The Regulation and Organisation of the Trade in Indentured Servants for the American Colonies in London, 1645–1718, and the Career of William Haveland, Emigration Agent" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 2000); Wareing, "'Violently Taken Away or Cheatingly Duckoyed': The Illicit Recruitment in London of Indentured Servants for the American Colonies, 1645–1718," *London Journal: A Review of Metropolitan Society Past and Present* 26, no. 2 (2001): 3. "Spirits" began delivering workers into bondage as early as 1618, when Owen Evans was charged with illegally "pressing maidens" in Devon and Dorset to serve in Bermuda and Virginia. See "Kidnapping Maidens, to Be Sold in Virginia, 1618," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 6, no. 3 (1899): 228–230.

⁵⁶ William Waller Hening, *The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619*, 13 vols. (New York, 1819–1823), 1: 257; Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, 50.

⁵⁷ Firth and Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, 1: 681, 912; Coldham, *Emigrants in Chains*, 46–47.

Katherine's Stairs neighborhood, delivered more than 6,000 people into bondage between 1658 and 1670. While it is impossible to tell exactly how many people were lured into slavery by spirits, tens of thousands of people from Britain and Ireland ended up working as bond slaves in the Chesapeake and Caribbean during the revolutionary period.⁵⁸

Outside of the Chesapeake and Caribbean, however, antislavery positions began to take root in the New England colonies.⁵⁹ Establishing its first comprehensive legal code in 1641, the Massachusetts Bay Colony expressly forbade "bond slavery" to avoid emulating Caribbean and Chesapeake colonists in making chattels out of their coreligionists.⁶⁰ As Governor John Winthrop wrote, what "we stand in need of is treasured up in the earth by the Creator to be fetched thence by the sweat of our brows."⁶¹ Importantly, however, the puritan work ethic and Bay Colony statute law did not prohibit the temporary enslavement of criminals and the temporary or perpetual enslavement of Africans and Native Americans.⁶² In the aftermath of the Pequot War (1637–1638), John Winthrop presided over the sale of captive Pequots into slavery on Providence Island, the short-lived puritan redoubt in the West Indies; the planters of Providence, in turn, shipped black slaves back to godly planters in New England. Trading and owning slaves would be countenanced in the Bay Colony

⁵⁸ The transcript of this investigation can be found in Public Record Office, London [hereafter cited as PRO], CO 389/2. See also Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados*, 51. David Harris Sacks notes that local efforts to stop spiriting in port cities such as Bristol involved more self-interest than human sympathy for victims, as merchants sought to stem competition from spirits in the bond slave trade. See Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450–1700* (Berkeley, Calif., 1991), 255. Sacks also details in his chapter on spiriting how local sectarians affiliated with the Cromwellian regime and engaged in the "servant trade" were targeted by their political opponents as "spirits" to mobilize popular support against them and the revolutionary government. London played host to a similar controversy in the 1640s, when Presbyterians used charges of "spiriting" to criticize Independents. In both cases, conservative anti-spiriting politics hardly amounted to nascent abolitionism. My research indicates that as part of a wider, transatlantic network of radical republicans, sectarians in London criticized their coreligionists who directed the state's entire traffic in bond slaves, revealing that anti-spiriting also became part of the internal debates among revolutionaries. Additionally, as I argue, the anti-spiriting politics of the transatlantic republicans, unlike the conservative campaign against sectarians alleged to be involved in spiriting, became integral to early abolitionism. My thanks to an anonymous outside reader commissioned by the *AHR* for a thoroughly detailed discussion of Sacks's work on anti-spiriting.

⁵⁹ Bond slavery had early critics in the Chesapeake, however. John Smith wrote that "slavery" would "bring a well-settled commonwealth to misery, much more Virginia." In 1619 in the Chesapeake, colonists began objecting to the buying and selling of their countrymen. John Rolfe called the trade "odious" and "a great scandal." In 1622, upon being purchased by a planter, Thomas Best exclaimed, "Sold . . . like a damned slave!" In December of that year, William Weston refused to contract with a "Mr. Newman" to bring "servants" to Virginia, for "servants were sold here up and down like horses, and therefore he held it not lawful to carry any." Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, 1: 80, 108–109.

⁶⁰ In the section of the Body of Liberties devoted to servants, statute 91 reads: "There shall never be any bond slavery, villeinage or captivity amongst us unless it be lawful captives taken in just wares, and such strangers as willingly sell themselves or are sold to us. And these shall have all the liberties and Christian usages which the law of God established in Israel concerning such persons doth morally require. This exempts none from servitude who shall be judged thereto by authority." For statute 91 on bond slavery and statutes 85–88 regarding servants, see "The Massachusetts Body of Liberties, 1641," *Old South Leaflets* 7 (Boston): 262.

⁶¹ Honest labor, thought Winthrop, would prevent the godly from lusting after "the fleshpots of Egypt," or the dross puritans associated with the Bible's prototypical slave society. See John Winthrop, *Reasons to Be Considered for Justifying the Undertakers of the Intended Plantation in New England* (1628), Objection VIII, Answer 1, Answer 3, http://www.winthropsociety.com/doc_reasons.php.

⁶² For the enslavement of criminals in Massachusetts, see John Noble, ed., *Records of the Court of Assistants of the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay*, 3 vols. (1630–1692) (Boston, 1901–1928), 2: 86, 90, 118.

as long as those bargained for were already slaves or had been taken captive in a so-called “just war.” In 1645, perhaps after reflecting on the earlier sale of Africans from Providence in New England, the Bay Colony magistrate Richard Saltonstall condemned an attempt to revive the African slave trade in Massachusetts, declaring that the two men whom Captain Thomas Keyser had sold there after spiriting them away from “Guinea” should be returned to their African homeland. “Stealing negers” amounted to a “crying sin,” according to Saltonstall, “contrary, both to the law of God, and the law of this country.” Saltonstall did not choose, however, to invoke the full power of the law against Keyser, as the Body of Liberties capital statute number ten called for death against “any man who stealeth a man or man-kind.”⁶³

Winthrop and the government of Massachusetts, however, did commit the act of man-stealing against the radical Samuel Gorton. In 1638, Gorton had fled to Rhode Island in the wake of the Bay Colony court’s persecution of Anne Hutchinson’s radical religious faction. This campaign, conducted largely by Winthrop, rejected the sovereignty of English common law in Massachusetts, denied Hutchinson’s supporters the right to petition, and forced an election that suppressed their votes. This unseated the radicals’ most powerful political leader, Governor Henry Vane, and put Winthrop back in the governor’s chair.⁶⁴ Gorton settled with Hutchinson and her closest core of followers at Portsmouth on Aquidneck Island. They quickly fell out with their own governor, William Coddington, who, much like his friend John Winthrop, seemed bent on aggrandizing power in his own hands. When Coddington had Gorton flogged for sedition in 1640, the latter withdrew to a new outpost called Shawomet, next to Roger Williams’s settlement at Providence. Around this time, Coddington and Winthrop formed an alliance to rid themselves of the Gortonoges, the name that Gorton’s Narragansett Indian allies had given to his followers. In 1643, under Winthrop’s direction and with Coddington’s connivance, the Bay Colony militia invaded Shawomet, forcing the settlement’s women and children to flee into nearby swamps, where two of them died. The militia proceeded to burn Shawomet to the ground and then marched Gorton and several other prominent men of the

⁶³ For Saltonstall’s decision on the Keyser case, see Nathaniel Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England* [hereafter cited as *Records of Massachusetts Bay Colony*], 5 vols. (Boston, 1853), 2: 98–99, 129, 136; 3: 13, 46, 51, 58. For more on New England slavery in the seventeenth century, see Winthrop Jordan, “The Influence of the West Indies on the Origins of New England Slavery,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1961): 243–250; Michael J. Fickes, “‘They Could Not Endure That Yoke’: The Captivity of Pequot Women and Children after the War of 1637,” *New England Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (2000): 58–81; Wendy Warren, “The Cause of Her Grief: The Rape of a Slave Woman in Early New England,” *Journal of American History* 93, no. 4 (2007): 1031–1049; Eric Kimball, “A Wider Sea of Hate: The Atlantic Dimensions of Race and Slavery in Seventeenth Century New England” (paper presented at the National Conference on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Power in Maritime America, Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Conn., October 2006). My thanks to Professor Kimball for making this paper available to me.

⁶⁴ John Winthrop, Esq., *The History of New England from 1630 to 1649*, ed. James Savage, 2 vols. (Boston, 1825) [hereafter cited as *Winthrop’s Journal*], 1: 210–211, 216; John Winthrop, “A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruine of the Antinomians, Familists and Libertines,” in David D. Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638: A Documentary History* (Durham, N.C., 1990), 220, 224, 245, 250, 254, 257, 260–261; Shurtleff, *Records of Massachusetts Bay Colony*, 1: 207; Emery Battis, *Saints and Sectaries: Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1962), 188.

colony to Boston in chains, where the General Court enslaved Gorton and his fellow prisoners, forcing them into hard labor around the Bay Colony.⁶⁵

A popular outcry in Boston against this draconian treatment led to the release of the Rhode Islanders, after which Gorton promptly left for London, where he ultimately convinced Parliament to protect his fledgling settlement from Massachusetts's aggression. While in London, he preached to Thomas Lambe's General Baptist congregation, which endorsed a salvific egalitarianism, teaching that Christ had died for all of humanity. Lambe's church met in London's Coleman Street Ward, one of the radical epicenters of the English Revolution. During Gorton's stay, Lambe's church and others in the ward served as organizing headquarters of sorts for the burgeoning Leveller movement at the high point of its alliance with the New Model Army. During this time, Gorton befriended the army chaplain and universal salvationist John Saltmarsh, a Leveller supporter who literally rose from his deathbed to condemn Cromwell for imprisoning the mutineers in the wake of their stand for army democracy at Corkbush Field in 1647.⁶⁶ In the midst of his London sojourn, Gorton also published his most famous tract, *Simplicities Defense*. In the pamphlet, the radical compared Winthrop to Herod, calling him the Bay Colony's "God man," who, "to satisfy his own lusts, in his lordship over it . . . pursues with all eagerness to make himself a god, by reigning over the bodies and estates of men." Whether subjected to arbitrary political power or hard labor in chains, Gorton argued that human beings, "that species or kind that God hath honored with his own image," should not be made "slaves" to one another because God had not "made man to be a vassal to his own species or kind."⁶⁷

By the time Gorton returned to New England in 1648, his allies had united the disparate settlements in the Narragansett Bay region into the colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. The colony's new constitution reified an earlier Aquidneck compact designed to rein in Coddington, limiting governors to one-year terms. In a radical departure from the mixed constitution of monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic elements favored by most political thinkers of the day, the Aquidneck settlers styled their government as a simple "democracy," while the 1647 constitution called its body politic "democratical." In direct contrast to the Bay Colony political system and in line with the "neo-Roman" and Christian humanist republicanism then

⁶⁵ Nathaniel Ward, *The Simple Cobar of Agawam in America* (1646), ed. P. M. Zall (Lincoln, Neb., 1969), 14; Nathaniel Morton, *New England's Memorial* (Cambridge, 1669), 108–109; Edward Winslow, *Hyprocrisie Unmasked* (London, 1646), 53–55; Shurtleff, *Records of Massachusetts Bay Colony*, 2: 41, 46; David S. Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World: Heresy to Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), 93–96; Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 139; Philip F. Gura, *A Glimpse of Sion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620–1660* (Middletown, Conn., 1984), 280–282; Samuel Gorton, *Simplicities Defense against a Many-Headed Policy* (London, 1646), in Sacvan Bercovitch, ed., *Tracts against New England* (New York, 1985), 60–66.

⁶⁶ Samuel Gorton's *Letter to Lord Hyde in Behalf of the Narragansett Sachems* (Providence, R.I., 1930), 6–15; George A. Brighton, "A Defense of Samuel Gorton and the Settlers of Shawomet," *Rhode Island Historical Tracts* 17 (1863): 42–120; Philip F. Gura, "The Radical Ideology of Samuel Gorton: New Light on the Relation of English to American Puritanism," *William and Mary Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1979): 78–100; for Saltmarsh, see his *A Letter from the Army* (London, 1647); and Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, 88–90. Importantly, in the 1650s, Gorton published two tracts in defense of Saltmarsh, *Saltmarsh Returned from the Dead* (London, 1655) and *An Antidote to the Common Plague of the World* (London, 1657), proof that his association with the Levellers and their supporters continued to shape his thinking after his return to America.

⁶⁷ Gorton, *Simplicities Defense*, 38, 42.

developing among the English revolutionaries, the 1647 constitution guarded against the institutionalization of any form of prerogative power in the government, as this would always threaten to undo the sovereignty of a people, subjecting them to policies to which they did not consent.⁶⁸ Finding this new arrangement entirely unacceptable, Coddington returned to England, and somehow secured a new charter that declared him governor for life. He then returned to Rhode Island armed with this new power in the fall of 1651, which in the view of Gorton, Williams, and their allies jeopardized the colony's early experiment in republican democracy. To abrogate Coddington's charter, the assembly dispatched John Clarke and Roger Williams to Old England in 1652.⁶⁹

While Williams and Clarke labored in London to protect colonial republicans from political slavery, Gorton worked in America to defeat chattel slavery, guiding the first ordinance outlawing perpetual slavery in the Atlantic world through the Rhode Island assembly. Having witnessed with revulsion "the common course practiced amongst Englishmen to buy Negroes, to that end that they may have them for service or slaves forever," the Rhode Island assembly, separating itself from Coddington's faction, resolved to act for "the preventing of such practices among us." But moving beyond the permanent enslavement of Africans, the statute also sought to prevent the type of bond slavery that young people such as Charles Bayly suffered in Maryland. Consequently, through Gorton's leadership, the law placed both bond and permanent slavery on a continuum of anti-Christian inequity, ordering "that no black mankind or white being forced by covenant bond or otherwise" would "serve any man or his assigns for longer than ten years." "Black mankind or white" bound labor in Rhode Island *would* serve "as the manner is with English servants." Rejecting the slave codes of Chesapeake and Caribbean colonies, Rhode Islanders looked toward the restoration of traditional English labor laws, although under a radical form of republican government that they had developed in America, but one that nonetheless was guided by the egalitarian spirit that had inspired Gorton during his days among the Levellers in London.⁷⁰

Within the context of Rhode Island's Atlantic-wide effort to preserve a republican form of government, the colony's abolition ordinance linked the struggle for liberation from political enslavement during the age of the English Revolution with opposition to economic slavery—precisely when the latter began expanding expo-

⁶⁸ See John Russell Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England*, vol. 1: 1636–1663 (Providence, R.I., 1857), 38–65 and 111–115 for the constitutions; as well as J. S. Maloy's discussions of them in *The Colonial American Origins of Modern Democratic Thought* (Cambridge, 2008), 140–170.

⁶⁹ Henry E. Turner, *William Coddington in Rhode Island Colonial Affairs: An Historical Inquiry* (Providence, R.I., 1878), 22–57; Sydney V. James, *John Clarke and His Legacies: Religion and Law in Colonial Rhode Island, 1638–1750*, ed. Theodore Dwight Bozeman (University Park, Pa., 1999), 49–52.

⁷⁰ It should also be noted that the phrase "black mankind" was probably meant to subsume Native Americans, many of whom served as bound laborers in Rhode Island, since at the time "black" was not applied exclusively to those of African descent. For colonists who persisted in slaveholding or tried to sell their slaves to avoid a financial loss, the colony ordered a fine of £40, more than twice the approximate price of a slave, thus removing any profit motive from resisting the law. For the Rhode Island abolition law, see Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island*, 1: 242–243; Jordan, "The Influence of the West Indies on the Origins of New England Slavery," 224; Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 126. The secondary literature on the abolition law is unjustifiably thin; more research into this underappreciated event would do much to improve our understanding of how abolitionism took root even as slave societies came into being in the seventeenth-century English Atlantic.

nentially around the early empire. Research has not yet revealed why the Rhode Islanders chose this particular moment to "prevent" slavery from developing among them, but a recent influx of settlers from Barbados, most probably slaveholders, may have triggered this attempt. Nonetheless, here we have what may well have been the first instance in history when a republican-style government, having explicitly defined itself as a democracy to prevent being politically enslaved by arbitrary forms of political power, sought to cleanse itself of the most extreme form of arbitrary economic power, chattel slavery. This inaugural attempt to abolish slavery should not be judged a complete failure because of Rhode Island's eighteenth-century development as a center for slave-trading; rather, it should be credited as a turning point in the conceptualization of human freedom that stood in stark contrast to the growing trend in England and its colonies to secure political liberty and the capitalist imperative of profit maximization on a material foundation that reconfigured human beings into multiple forms of private property.

In this respect, the Rhode Island abolition law of 1652 should be measured against the Protectorate's launch of the western design in 1654, which aimed to reorganize the imperial economy around slave-trading, slave labor, and state-sponsored piracy. Although the Protectorate tried to keep the destination of the expedition secret, savvy observers familiar with the slave trade could easily discern where the fleet intended to make landfall. The English slave trader John Paige did as much when ships for the expedition began anchoring on the London waterfront in July 1654. Paige knew from his own experience in outfitting slave ships that the "preparations and provisions" of the fleet portended a voyage for the West Indies.⁷¹

When the expedition finally did attack the Spanish on Hispaniola in April 1655, it met with disaster. More than 1,000 English soldiers died in just twenty days of campaigning, many in chaotic ambushes staged by freed slaves, but most from disease.⁷² Although the expedition's infantry commander, General Robert Venables, returned to England to recover from a bout with dysentery, he left thousands of hungry and disease-riddled men behind on lightly defended Jamaica, which the armada took almost as an afterthought. Starvation and endemic disease ensued, eventually killing 6,000 of the 7,000 soldiers garrisoned on the island. Those who did survive mutinied, refusing to help "plant" the colony, seeing the work they were ordered to do as more fitting for slaves than for soldiers. A self-proclaimed "eye witness" to the expedition, identifying himself as "I.S.," wrote in 1656 that by pressing "idle, profane, and irreligious ones" to "be sent over" to the Caribbean "as soldiers and servants," the Protectorate aimed at the "utter extirpation" of the poor whom it had forced to fight and plant for the empire.⁷³

⁷¹ John Paige to William Clerke, July 11, 1654, in Steckley, *The Letters of John Paige*, 108.

⁷² C. H. Firth, ed., *The Narrative of General Venables, with an Appendix of Papers Relative to the Expedition to the West Indies and the Conquest of Jamaica, 1654–1655* (London, 1900), 20, 28, 34, 45, Appendix B, 116–122.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 20, 28, 34, 45, Appendix B, 116–122, Appendix E, 156; Bernard Capp, *Cromwell's Navy: The Fleet and the English Revolution, 1648–1660* (Oxford, 1989), 88; S. A. G. Taylor, *The Western Design: An Account of Cromwell's Expedition to the Caribbean*, 2nd ed. (London, 1969), 91–92; Carla Gardina Pestana, "English Character and the Fiasco of the Western Design," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 3, no. 1 (2005): 5; Bodleian Library, Rawlinson Mss A 36, fols. 368, 374–376; A 37, fol. 31; A 53, fol. 284; I.S., *A Brief and Perfect Journal of the Late Proceedings and Success of the English Army in the West Indies, cont'd until June 1655* (London, 1655), 6, 16, 24.

When part of the fleet returned in late July 1655 with the shocking news of the army's bloody and humiliating defeat, Cromwell locked himself in his "closet" (his chamber).⁷⁴ Formerly unshakable in his providential convictions, the Lord Protector now felt utterly rebuked by God. In a letter to the expedition's new commander, Admiral Goodson, Cromwell professed that "no doubt we have provoked the Lord, and it is good for us to know, and be abased for the same."⁷⁵ In the wake of the disastrous news from the West Indies, the Protectorate insisted that all the "expense of blood and treasure" in the Caribbean would be made good "by endeavoring that the same might reap some fruits thereof."⁷⁶ One of Cromwell's critics, the naval administrator Robert Blackborne, lamented that this "dominion" that had been "impiously" acquired through imperial conquest would be "impiously kept." In this light, the regime planned perversely to recoup providential favor not by abolishing the expropriation of the liberty, labor, and bodies of people from Britain, Ireland, and around the Atlantic world, but by expanding it.⁷⁷ In 1656, the Council of State ordered judges to send assize lists to Whitehall to expedite the colonial exportation of English criminals and the poor. A subsequent sweep in London of the desperate and destitute sent more than 1,000 new plantation workers to Barbados, while portentously across the Atlantic, the trade in enslaved Africans began increasing, with close to 2,000 a year arriving on Barbados alone by 1656.⁷⁸

Historians have written much concerning the imperial crisis that engulfed England in the wake of the failure of the western design, when many of the country's republicans decisively turned against the Protectorate government for betraying the revolution. The part played by ex-colonists in organizing this political disaffection has yet to be explored in any sustained fashion, however. Some of the Lord Protector's most formidable and dedicated critics first underwent their radical political education in New England during the Hutchinson crisis, the conflicts between Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and the struggles to prevent political slavery and the rise of slave societies. Having returned to Old England, these radicals joined up with a loose coalition of millenarian, anti-Protectorate republicans known as the Fifth Monarchists. Of these, we already know that John Clarke had returned to London on an errand to preserve republican government in Rhode Island against the designs of William Coddington. Clarke joined two other New Englanders, Wentworth Day and Thomas Venner, in Fifth Monarchist meetings held in the old Leveller bastion of Coleman Street Ward, London, where the revolutionary spirit of liberty had so

⁷⁴ Firth, *The Clarke Papers*, 3: 60; David Armitage, "The Cromwellian Protectorate and the Languages of Empire," *Historical Journal* 35, no. 3 (1992): 540.

⁷⁵ Cromwell to Goodson, October 30, 1655, quoted in Armitage, "The Cromwellian Protectorate and the Languages of Empire," 542.

⁷⁶ Firth, *The Clarke Papers*, 3: 65.

⁷⁷ R[obert] B[lackborne], *Letter from a Christian Friend in the City to His Friend* (London, 1656), 7.

⁷⁸ *CSPC 1547–1660*, 447; Mary Anne Everett Green, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1649–1660*, 13 vols. (London, 1875–1886) [hereafter cited as *CSPD 1649–1660*], 10: 324, 343; Bodleian Library, Rawlinson Mss A 35, fol. 163; PRO C 66 2912/7; Firth and Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, 2: 1262–1264; Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth*, 4: 33; Coldham, *Emigrants in Chains*, 50; *CSPV*, 30: 184, 209, 309; Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 47. For the African trade at this time, see David Eltis, "Seventeenth Century Migration and the Slave Trade: The English Case in Comparative Perspective," in Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, eds., *Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives* (New York, 1997), 96; and Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, 192–193.



FIGURE 3: The imperial ambitions of the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell, shown here crowned with laurels, are clearly in evidence on this coin, minted in 1656 in the wake of the western design. The English translation of the Latin motto on the obverse reads: "Peace is sought by war." Image reproduced courtesy of chards.co.uk.

intoxicated Samuel Gorton during the late 1640s. Day trained in the Bay Colony militia in the early 1640s during a period when it petitioned for religious toleration and the expansion of the franchise to non-church members. He returned to England during the first civil war and joined the New Model Army. Serving as a "cornet" or flag bearer in Thomas Harrison's regiment of cavalry, he helped lead his mutinous comrades in support of the *Agreement of the People* at Corkbush Field. Venner, a master wine cooper formerly of Salem and later of Boston, had served alongside Day in the Bay Colony militia before returning to London in 1651, where he worked as a cooper in the Tower of London. Clarke, who circulated petitions against the Protectorate government, would suffer arrest in 1658 for preaching against the regime with Day on Coleman Street. As "Cornet Day" had proclaimed earlier in December 1655 to hundreds of Fifth Monarchists assembled at All Hallows Church, the greed of the Protector and his corrupt circle had led to the loss of "many men's lives" and

"much blood and treasure" during the "secret design on Hispaniola." This, as Day read, "strengthened the wicked in their principles," a reference to the slave traders and money men such as Martin Noell who had planned and profited from the English invasion of the Spanish Caribbean.⁷⁹

At the Fifth Monarchist meetings that Venner held in his house near Katherine's Stairs, the faithful assembled next to one of early modern England's most notorious places of economic and political enslavement. Katherine's Stairs provided access to the Thames docks for provisioning warehouses engaged in the Atlantic trade. Blue-water ship's captains visited the East London neighborhood to purchase spirited workers covertly kept in dockside "cook shops" or victualing warehouses. Inmates languished in these impromptu dungeons for weeks, awaiting passage to a new and usually short life of colonial bondage. A large number of these stolen beings were children, and from Venner's house, he and his followers must surely have heard the "crying and mourning" of their neighbors who pleaded from the riverbank for their children's "redemption from slavery."⁸⁰ While spirits usually resorted to deception, the navy's press gangs used brute force, pouring out from their rendezvous point at Katherine's Stairs to comb the streets for the neighborhood's many sailors. The popular and violent resistance that spirits and press gangs elicited made Venner and his comrades witness to innumerable fights, riots, escapes, and near-escapes as Londoners struggled to avoid forced labor on plantations and the high seas. To Venner and other radicals who lived in the docklands of London's East End, the Protectorate's political enslavement of the nation through corrupt and arbitrary government had led, through the work of press gangs and spirits, to the bodily enslavement, both political and economic, of their neighbors and loved ones.⁸¹

Within the context of this life-and-death struggle between liberty and slavery, the combined republican principles, antinomian enthusiasm, and millenarian expectations that coursed through the Fifth Monarchist meetings held by Venner, Day, and Clarke led to a plot to overthrow the Protectorate that began in the summer of 1656 and continued to unfold through the spring of 1657. The former New England antinomian and Bay Colony governor Henry Vane lurked on the margins of the conspiracy. Vane, who had become one of the most powerful men in England during

⁷⁹ C. H. Firth and Godfrey Davies, *The Regimental History of Cromwell's Army* (Oxford, 1940), 175–180; G. M. Juretic, "Wentworth Day," in Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, 3 vols. (Brighton, 1982–1984), 1: 217; Charles Banks, "Thomas Venner: The Boston Wine-Cooper and Fifth Monarchy Man," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 47 (1893): 437–444; Louise Breen, "Religious Radicalism in the Puritan Officer Corps: Heterodoxy, the Artillery Company, and Cultural Integration in Seventeenth Century Boston," *New England Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1995): 6–24; *A Narrative Wherein Is Faithfully Set Forth the Sufferings of John Canne, Wentworth Day, John Clarke . . .* (London, 1658); Day read from Vavassor Powell's *A Word for God; or, A Testimony on Truth's Behalf from Several Churches and Diverse Hundreds of Christians in Wales* (London, 1655) at All Hallows; quotes drawn from A-6. For the All Hallows meeting, see Birch, *Thurloe Papers*, 4: 302–317.

⁸⁰ Bullock, *Virginia Impartially Examined*, 44; Harlow, *A History of Barbados*, 300. For court records concerning Katherine's Stairs (also called Katherine's Tower and Katherine's Dock) and spiriting, see Jeaffreson, *Middlesex County Records*, 3: 99, 224, 229, 239, 256, 269, 336, 381.

⁸¹ Champlin Burrage, "The Fifth Monarchy Insurrections," *English Historical Review* 25 (1910): 722–747; Lloyd, *The British Seaman: A Social Survey, 1200–1860* (London, 1968), 127–129; Birch, *Thurloe Papers*, 4: 184–187; W. Noel Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies, 1661–1668* (London, 1880) [hereafter cited as *CSPC 1661–1668*], 220; Frances Henderson, ed., *The Clarke Papers V: Further Selections from the Papers of William Clarke* (Cambridge, 2005), 203.

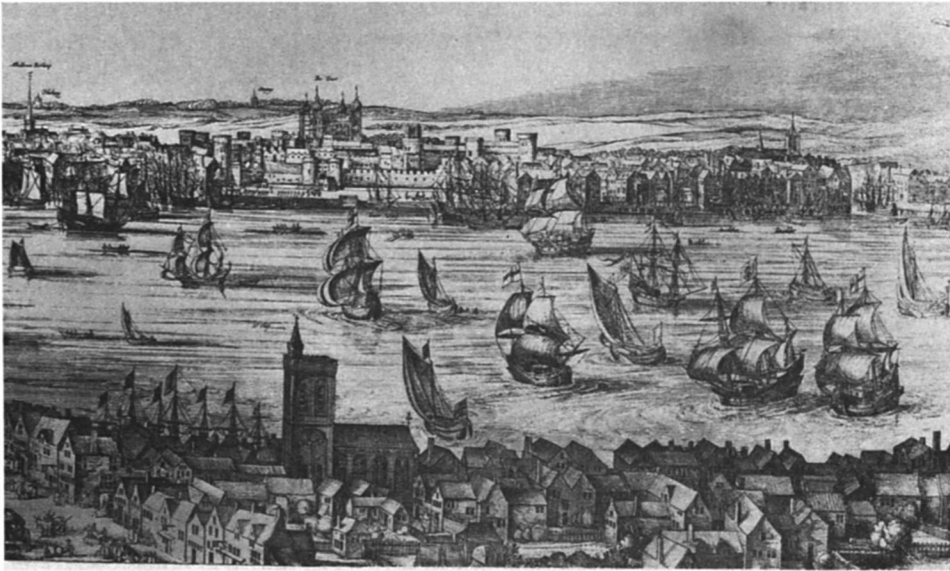


FIGURE 4: This view of the River Thames and east London portrays one of the most critical spots in the early English empire. Deep-water ships engaged in the transatlantic trade ride at anchor in the foreground and in the background near the Customs House to the immediate left of the Tower of London. The Tower itself served as a depot to supply ships with provisions as well as impressed soldiers, sailors, and future bond slaves. To the immediate right of the Tower lay the neighborhood of Katherine's Stairs, made infamous in the seventeenth century as the rendezvous point of navy press gangs and spirits engaged in the illicit bond slave trade. Detail from Claes Jansz Visscher, *Visscher's View of London*, engraving, 1616. LC-DIG-pga-02965, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

the revolution through his leadership of the parliamentary "war party," made his anti-Protectorate manuscript *A Healing Question* available to Venner and his followers through his steward John Browne, another Fifth Monarchist formerly of New England.⁸² Although Vane had the manuscript delivered to Venner's congregation before its publication, the radicals rejected his advice to pursue change through parliamentary methods. But despite the precautions they took in organizing the plot, first Day and then Venner and two other conspirators were imprisoned before they could bring off their intended uprising.⁸³

Perhaps because Day spent most of 1656–1657 in jail, Venner emerged as the key London figure in a transatlantic network of radical republicans, organizing the most militant and sustained republican opposition ever directed against the Cromwellian Protectorate. But the substance of the manifestos that Venner, Clarke, and Day's plotters debated and produced matter more than the ultimate collapse of their movement. During their deliberations on a tract titled *England's Remembrancer* before the

⁸² For John Browne, see Bodleian Library, Rawlinson Mss A 47, fol. 30; Charles Henry Pope, *The Pioneers of Massachusetts: A Descriptive List Drawn from Records of the Colonies, Towns, and Churches, and Other Contemporaneous Documents* (Baltimore, 1965), 73. Vane had enjoyed Cromwell's friendship before the latter's dissolution of the Rump Parliament, an action that prompted Vane to resign from the Council of State, thoroughly disgusted with Cromwell's and the army's grasping bid for power. For the 1656–1657 Fifth Monarchist plot, see Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism* (London, 1972), 114–119. Although written thirty-six years ago, Capp's book still impresses as a synthesis of social and intellectual history.

⁸³ *CSPD 1649–1660*, 9: 825–826, 847; Birch, *Thurloe Papers*, 4: 184–187; Burrage, "The Fifth Monarchy Insurrections," 734; British Library, Add Mss 4459, fols. 111–112.

opening of the Second Protectorate Parliament in September 1656, Venner's congregation recalled, among a host of the Protectorate's many crimes, how "the blood of many thousands" unjustly impressed for the western design was "poured forth in waste like water." It went on to recall the memory of their "banished neighbors . . . sold for slaves to serve like beasts the will and lust of great men" who profited from the commerce in and labor of bond slaves.⁸⁴ These words surely resonated with Venner's followers, who faced the daily threat of their own enslavement by spirits, press gangs, and the Protectorate's policy of transportation for the desperate poor. In one of their pamphlets, the rebels wrote that having "transgressed in the accursed thing," a biblical phrase associated with idolizing wartime pillage, God had "blasted" the "wickedness" of Cromwell's "designs" on "Hispaniola" for having placed "perfect yokes on the bodies and consciences of men." "Captivated in bonds" by a government that had "brought forth . . . nothing but blood monsters," the nation wore the "iron chains" of its rulers, whose "lusts" had "now become laws." But "the Lord had put the forces into the hands of the saints, and made them overcomers" to liberate the people of "these enslaved nations."⁸⁵

Demanding "blood for blood" and claiming sovereign political power in the name of "King Jesus," the radicals declared that they would rise up in arms to lead the nation "out of the land of bondage." In New England, Venner became acquainted with New World slavery and antislavery, but in London, near Katherine's Stairs, he and his rebels conspired at the epicenter of England's slave-trading empire, one that encompassed the traffic of peoples from Britain, Ireland, the Americas, and Africa. To usher in a new era of liberty, the rebels resolved to destroy the power of "the money changers, and merchants, and buyers and sellers, that are so busy now in the merchandise of slaves and souls of men." Adopting the language of kidnapping, Venner's men prophesied that the apostate regime would "deceive the nation no more, whose souls were made slaves unto her by the cunning and deceit of her spirits."⁸⁶ In the wake of broken engagements, army government, and the deaths of thousands stolen to fight for the state or to labor as the merchandise of "unscrupulous men," radical consciousness from the colonies expanded in England, linking the end of the slave trade to the entire empire's redemption from political slavery.

In 1658, following Cromwell's death, the collapse of the Protectorate, and the revival of the republic, Vane's return to parliamentary power paved the way for the release of Venner, Day, and other imprisoned radicals. But as Vane went about the work of restoring the free state, a scandal over bond slavery came to light in March 1659. The Royalists Oxenbridge Foyle and Marcellus Rivers had been captured in

⁸⁴ *England's Remembrancer*, A-6. See also Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*, 14.

⁸⁵ *A Standard Set Up* (London, 1657), 1, 4, 6-8.

⁸⁶ *The Banner of Truth Displayed*, 1, A, A2, 53-54, 90. This anonymous pamphlet can almost certainly be attributed to Venner's insurgent group because of its references to meetings held with other republican factions aligned against Cromwell over the previous summer, its outright Fifth Monarchist principles, and its open advocacy of violent rebellion, which, among all the other Fifth Monarchist meetings in London, Venner's group alone explicitly enacted, strengthened by defectors from John Simpson's Fifth Monarchist congregation. The plotting initially included high-ranking members of the armed forces such as Colonel John Okey, an agitator during the army debates of 1647, and Admiral John Lawson, who refused a commission in the western design; these officers opted against violence in late summer 1656. Moreover, *The Banner of Truth Displayed* anticipates the title of the tract *A Standard Set Up*, which Venner's group issued in exact conjunction with the rising they planned for April 7, 1657.

Salisbury during Penruddock's Rising and with seventy-two others had been sold into bond slavery on Barbados by Martin Noell, Cromwell's key financier. Foyle and Rivers petitioned for their and their fellow prisoners' release from captivity, arguing that their sale into forced labor violated the rights of "Englishmen." The petition went before the House of Commons the week after a spiriting riot had raged through the West End of London, not far from the halls of Parliament. In the ensuing debate, Vane interjected that the principles of the revolution stood in stark contrast to the evil of enslaving "the free born people of England." Parliament, however, did nothing on this score and put plans in motion to establish a new slave-trading monopoly in West Africa.⁸⁷

THE RESTORATION OF CHARLES II in May 1660 swept Vane and his republican colleagues back out of power and drove Venner and his remaining followers into an embittered state of desperation. Venner held a series of Fifth Monarchist meetings that summer and fall, which resulted in the publication of *A Door of Hope*. The tract contended that "the true church of Christ will be brought out of the Wilderness," an allusion to the New England roots of Venner, Clarke, Day, and other Fifth Monarchists.⁸⁸ The saints would reestablish a free state designed, in anticipation of the apocalypse, to abolish all "anti-Christian yokes" according to the prescriptions of the Mosaic Code. In Old England, the Fifth Monarchist William Aspinwall, a former Bay Colony militia member banished for petitioning during Winthrop's onslaught against the antinomians, published this set of Old Testament laws in 1655, drawing from a collection of them organized originally by his old Boston minister John Cotton.⁸⁹ The ex-colonists on Coleman Street made sure to point out in *A Door of Hope* that the Mosaic Code prohibited "man-stealing," or kidnapping people to sell them into slavery.⁹⁰

On January 9, 1661, Venner's band of veterans and ex-colonists launched a rebellion to overthrow the newly restored Stuart Dynasty. Their battle cry, "King Jesus

⁸⁷ *England's Slavery; or, Barbados Merchandise* (London, 1659); *The Diary of Thomas Burton, 24 March 1659* (London, 1828), 244–253; Stock, *Proceedings and Debates*, 247–263; Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, 208–212. For the spiriting riot, see Jeaffreson, *Middlesex County Records*, 3: 278–279.

⁸⁸ *A Door of Hope; or, A Call and Declaration for the Gathering Together of the First Ripe Fruits unto the Standard of Our Lord King Jesus* (London, 1661), 3–6.

⁸⁹ Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World*, 101–102; John Cotton, *An Abstract of Laws and Government . . . Published after His Death by William Aspinwall* (London, 1655). Aspinwall published the tract through Livewell Chapman, a London printer who frequented Venner's Coleman Street meetings. For more on Aspinwall, see Stephen Robbins, "Manifold Afflictions: The Life and Writings of William Aspinwall" (Ph.D. diss., Oklahoma State University, 1988).

⁹⁰ The phrase appears in Exodus 21:16 and 1 Timothy 1:10 and encompassed a capital offense. Contemporaries used the term "man-stealer" interchangeably with "spirit." See CSPC 1661–1668, 331. The Fifth Monarchists turned the existing penal code on its head, abolishing capital punishment for theft while restoring it for man-stealing. Punishments doled out for spiriting under the reigning law were often farcical. One convicted spirit was fined twelve pence. *A Door of Hope* stipulated that thieves should be "sold" to a "workhouse" to pay off their debts, and not, as with the Cromwellian convict transportation system, enslaved in the colonies to profit a planter who exploited their labor in a way that exponentially multiplied the value of what had been stolen (5). For a contemporary explanation of Mosaic restitution, see the Leveller Samuel Chidley's *A Cry against a Crying Sinne; or, A Just Complaint to the Magistrates, against Them Who Have Broken the Statute Laws of God, by Killing of Men Meerly for Theft* (London, 1652), 16–17.

and the heads upon the gate,” rang through the streets, an allusion to the hanging, drawing, and quartering of Wentworth Day’s former regimental commander, Thomas Harrison, and Hugh Peter, a former New Englander who had earned fame for his fiery sermons to the New Model Army. The most ferocious combat took place on Wood Street, in front of the notorious Comptor Prison, which the Fifth Monarchists would have associated with the state’s transportation of the poor into colonial bond slavery. The rebels demanded the release of the “poor prisoners” and stormed the gaol, but London’s trained bands repulsed them before they could carry the day. In the melee, Venner brained three soldiers to death with his halberd despite sustaining nineteen wounds. The dramatic and bloody scene at the Comptor reveals Venner’s fanatical determination as well as the transatlantic radical’s expansive concept of republican liberty, in which the emancipation of England’s slaves would mark the first act in the restoration of the English “free state.”⁹¹

In the end, both Thomas Venner and Henry Vane would pay with their lives for their dedication to the Good Old Cause. Wracked with painful wounds during his trial at the Old Bailey, Venner declared that the “testimony” of his life in New England had taught him that it was the duty of all the saints “to look for liberty.”⁹² A year later, when guards led Vane away after his conviction for treason, the former Bay Colony governor quoted the last words that the old Boston militiaman Venner had spoken from the scaffold: “Whom man judges, God will not condemn.”⁹³

The transatlantic network of radical republicans joined their antipathy toward the development of colonial slave societies with their attempt to redeem both Rhode Island and the English free state from what they regarded as political enslavement under arbitrary and autocratic power. The republican principles they espoused opened a door of hope that the liberation of human beings from chattel slavery could in turn free commonwealths from their own political bondage. In the process, they fashioned a profound, if seldom explored, defense of human liberty, one that deserves a more prominent place in the history of slavery and abolition as well as the intellectual history of early America, the English Atlantic, and the English Revolution.

⁹¹ “A Relation of the Arraignment and Trial of Those Who Made the Late Rebellious Insurrection in London, 1661,” in *A Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts on the Most Interesting and Entertaining Subjects . . . Selected from an Infinite Number in Print and Manuscript, in the Royal, Cotton, Sion, and Other Public as Well as Private Libraries; Particularly That of the Late Lord Somers*, 4 vols. (London, 1748), 4: 470 [hereafter cited as *The Somers Tracts*]; Laurence Echard, *The History of England* (London, 1707), 104. The Wood Street and Poultry Comptors (or Counters) received debtors and felons, but also saints who refused to pay tithes. Fifth Monarchists under arrest also served time there. Earlier, at the outbreak of the civil wars, it witnessed a riotous scene when supporters of Parliament stormed its gates to free their “brethren.” The Comptors had become a visceral symbol of tyranny and oppression to the godly, which helps to explain why they were singled out for attack at the beginning and end of the revolution. For accounts of the prisons, see James Peller Malcolm, *Londinium Redivivum; or, An Antient History and Modern Description of London*, 4 vols. (London, 1802–1807), vol. 4; R. F., *The True Relation of the Bloody Attempt by James Salowayes to Cut His Own Throat in the Comptor, upon Sunday the 21. of June, 1662* (London, 1663); R. S., *The Counter-Scuffle* (London, 1647); Thomas Jordan, *The Walks of Islington and Hogsdon, with the Humors of Compter Gate in Woodstreet* (London, 1657); *The Humble Petition of the Poore Distressed Prisoners in Poultry Compter* (London, 1644); *The Humble Petition of the Poor Debtors in the Common-Gaol, Newgate* (London, 1653); Bruce Watson, “The Compter Prisons of London,” *London Archaeologist* 7 (1993): 115–118.

⁹² “A Relation of the Arraignment and Trial,” in *The Somers Tracts*, 4: 470–471.

⁹³ Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World*, 110; Violet A. Rowe, *Sir Henry Vane the Younger: A Study in Political and Administrative History* (London, 1970), 241.

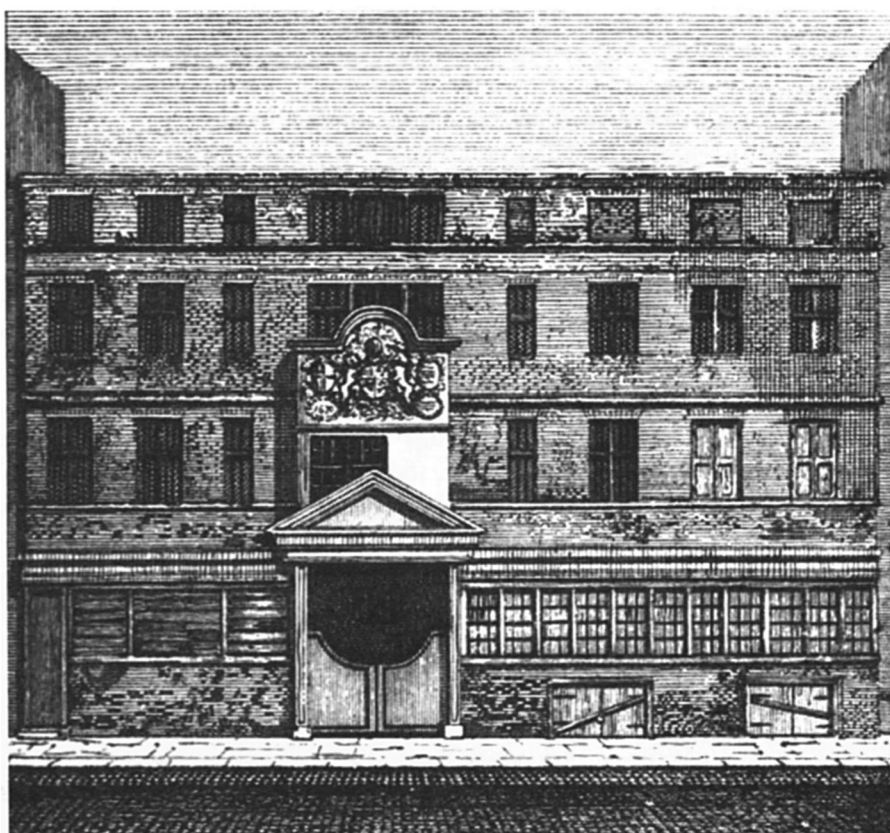


FIGURE 5: The most intense fighting that took place during Venner's 1661 rising occurred in front of the Wood Street Comptor, where the insurgents tried unsuccessfully to free the "poor prisoners," many of whom would have been destined for bond slavery in the colonies. "The Old Wood Street, Compter," from John W. Sherwell, *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Guild of Saddlers of the City of London* (London, 1889), 68.

The legal and illegal trade in "bond slaves" and permanently enslaved human beings surged in the wake of diminished wartime migration, the sugar boom, and the Protectorate's imperial conquests, accelerating the developmental pace of slave societies in the colonial Chesapeake and Caribbean, where tens of thousands of people were exploited for power and profit along a brutal spectrum of chattel slavery. The spirits' black market trade, the government's traffic in Irish tories, Scottish rebels, and English Royalists, and its transportation of the desperate poor swelled to meet the rising demand for unfree labor. Slave traders from Europe and the colonies would transport into bondage thousands of others from around the Atlantic world, including Ashantes, Mandinkos, Fulanis, Angolans, and others of African descent already enslaved in the Americas; less than a century later, English slave ships would come to dominate the African trade formerly governed by the Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese. Beginning in the Caribbean during the English Revolution and spreading throughout the Chesapeake and Carolina Lowcountry later in the century, the dramatic influx of African slave labor would lay the foundation for the terrible transformation to racialized slavery in the British Empire, when colonial assemblies changed the meaning of "negro" from a color to a demarcation of those who could

be permanently enslaved. With this sliding spectrum of slavery and slave-trading in view, rather than defining slavery in the English Atlantic by what it became in the eighteenth century, we should historicize it as something that changed over time. Applying this idea to the era of the English Revolution thus gives the people from Britain and Ireland who were trapped in a form of chattel bondage a more authentic voice in their own history. But this approach has other, perhaps more crucial benefits: it helps us to see how much more systematically dehumanizing, profitable, and culturally malignant slavery became when lifelong, race-based bondage eclipsed bond slavery as the dominant form of chattel labor in the English Atlantic. Having entered the prism of global slavery's history in bonded form in the mid-seventeenth century, slavery in the English Atlantic emerged in the eighteenth century as the "ultimate form of inhuman bondage," refracted into its racialized, perpetual form.⁹⁴

Carrying forward the idea that we should study the history of slavery as the history of slaveries, it follows that we should pursue the same flexible approach to the history of abolition, noting that it changed as slavery changed and as radicals developed new tactics and strategies to render rising antislavery sentiment into active abolitionism. In the mid-seventeenth century, in the midst of the English Revolution, a small number of radical colonists looked toward the abolition of multiple forms of slavery as important means to what they perceived as the greater end of establishing free commonwealths around the English Atlantic. Perhaps future research will reveal how spirit riots in England and the combined resistance of slaves and bond slaves in the colonies informed this process.

The radical ideas of freedom forged in the English Revolution as well as the resistance of slaves themselves certainly shaped the history of late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century abolition, when hundreds of thousands of black and white people organized around a common purpose, to end the trade in and perpetual enslavement of African peoples and their descendants in the Atlantic world. Importantly, abolitionists of both eras drew the seemingly simple yet historically transcendent conclusion that people cannot remain free while enslaving others.

⁹⁴ The phrase is David Brion Davis's; *Inhuman Bondage*, 11.

John Donoghue is Assistant Professor of History at Loyola University Chicago, where he teaches early American and Atlantic history. His book *"Fire under the Ashes": An Atlantic History of the English Revolution* will be published next year by the University of Chicago Press.